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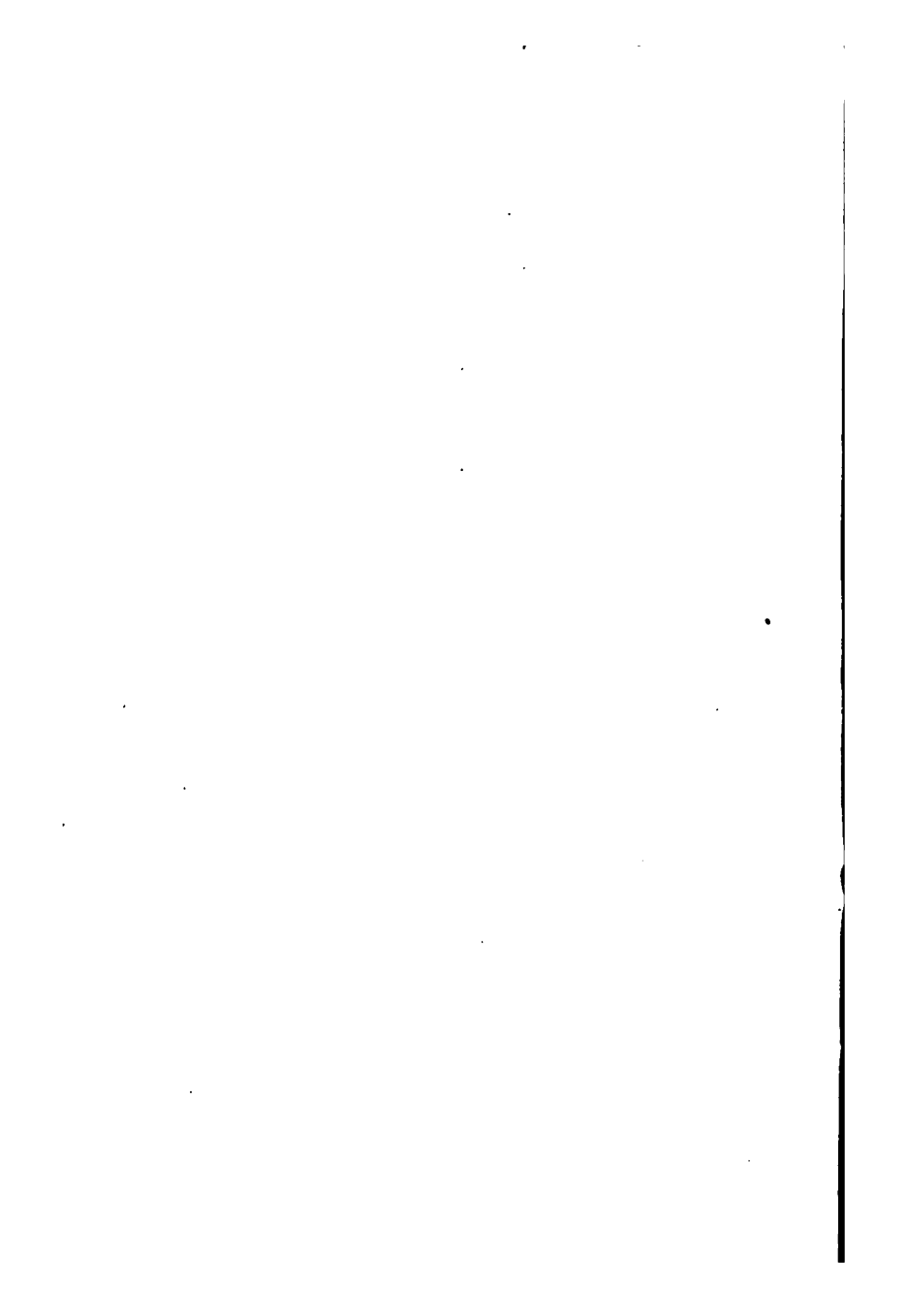


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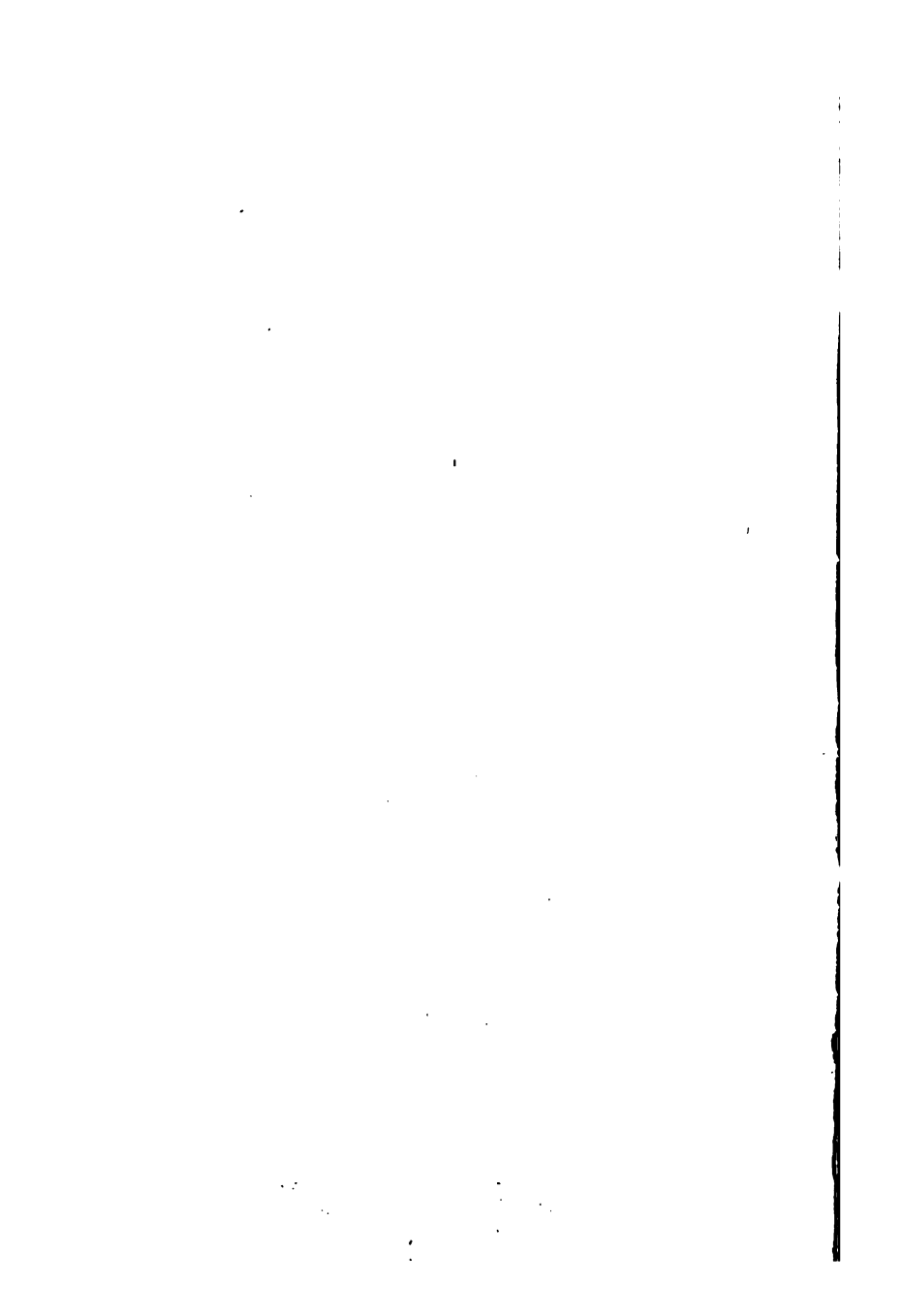


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HARUM SCARUM.



HARUM SCARUM.

1

THE STORY OF

A WILD GIRL.

BY

ESMÈ STUART, pseud. of.

Author of "Miss Fenwick's Failures," "For Half a Crown,"

"Carried Off," etc.

Leroy, Amélie Claire

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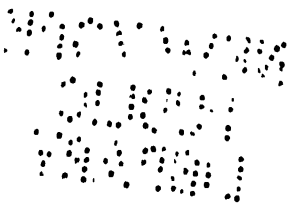
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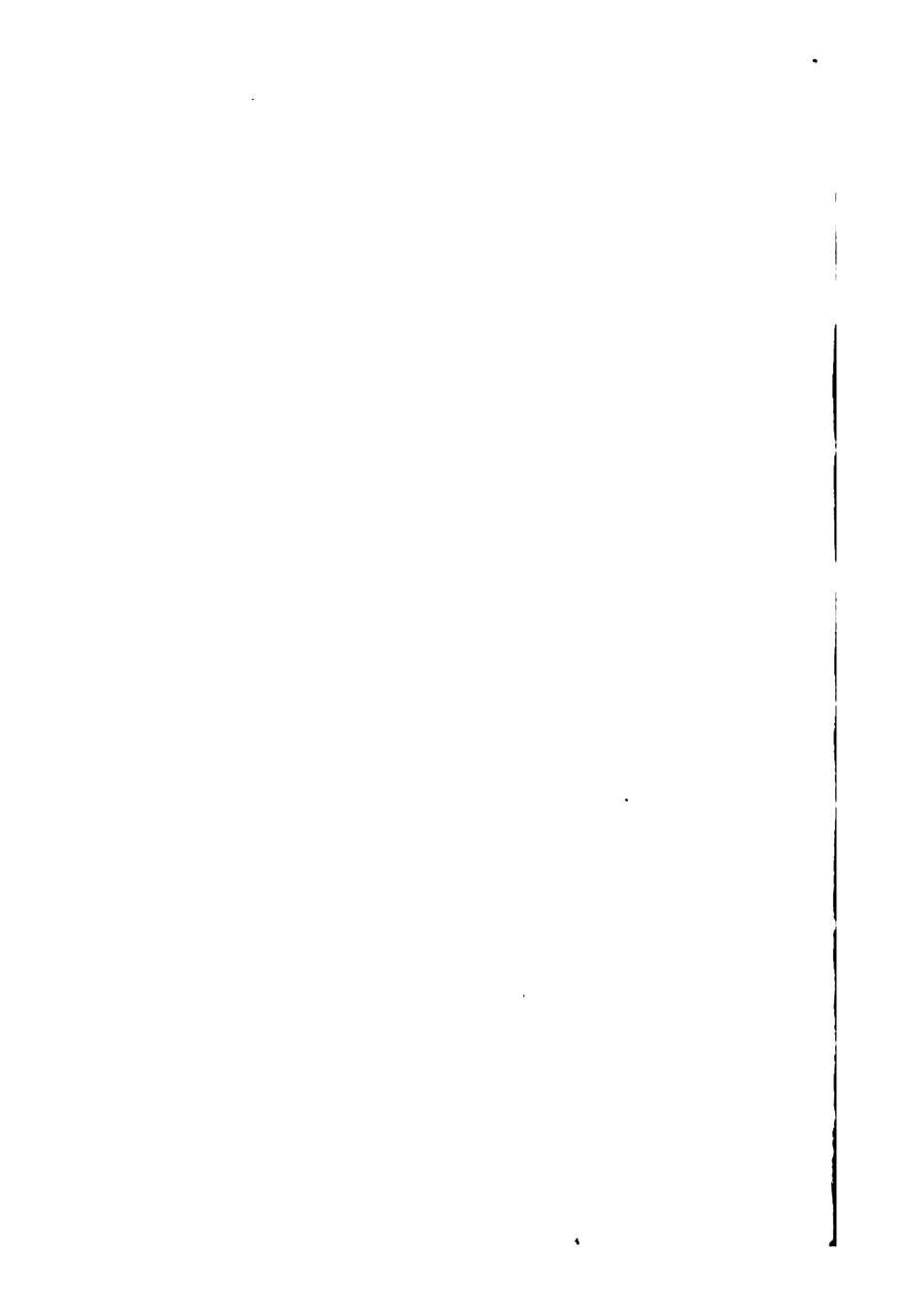
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HARUM SCARUM.

CHAPTER I.

SHE IS EXPECTED.

“MISS CRUMP,” said Lady Dove to her companion, “what are you stopping for?”

The poor companion had read on till her throat ached and a weariness which she could not disguise had taken possession of her.

“I beg your pardon, I thought perhaps Miss Whitburn would be soon arriving.”

“The hour of Antonia Whitburn’s arrival has nothing to do with your reading,” said her ladyship. “The whole business is very annoying to me, but reading soothes my mind. Go on, if you please.”

Miss Crump cleared her tired throat and in a weak voice she continued the novel which was suitable for soothing her ladyship’s nerves. It must be owned that she did not think very much about the words she was reading. Her mind went back to the time when she had first come, as a young and hopeful being, to Aldersfield House, full of ideas of being useful, helpful, and loving. Now she was a living machine and

she knew it, though she remembered the time when she had been quite otherwise.

"Poor child," she thought to herself, "I wonder how soon her youth will be crushed out of her! Poor child, poor child!"

Just at this moment of time Miss Anne Crump made several mistakes, but Lady Dove, being also busy with her own thoughts, said nothing, so that it was not till the companion called the hero by his wrong name that she was reproved.

"Really, Miss Crump, your reading is becoming quite unintelligible. If you left me, no one would take you in; and, pray, what would become of you?"

Miss Crump blushed as she answered sadly and humbly—

"I don't know, Lady Dove, I am sure."

"No more do I. No one would put up with your slowness, Miss Crump. Everybody is advanced now, and your education is merely nominal, I assure you merely nominal."

"I am afraid it is compared with the modern standard."

"That is just what I said, you need not repeat it. I am extremely worried about having to take in this girl. If Sir Evas was not so ludicrously conscientious, I should not have allowed him to suggest it even. But I hope people will see that we do our duty. Sir Evas says one cannot allow one's own flesh and blood to be—to be——"

"No, of course not," hastily put in Miss Crump without waiting for the end of Lady Dove's sentence.

"I did not finish my sentence, Miss Crump—I was

going to *say* that I should not like people to say that *our* niece was without a home."

"It would certainly be sad when there is so much room in this house."

"Room has nothing to do with it. She is the niece of Sir Evas' half-sister. The old Sir Evas married beneath him. My husband's stepmother was nobody, but still the girl could boast of being niece to Sir Evas Dove, and it would not do."

"Not at all," sighed Miss Crump. It had "done" for her to be nobody's niece in particular, but that was different. Her father had been a superior tradesman, but having failed in business, through the dishonesty of a partner, he had died of grief, leaving his only child, Anne, penniless at the age of twenty, and with but few relations to help her. Lady Dove had "rescued her out of charity," as she called it, and since then she had taken great care to keep this human being in complete bondage. The truth was, Miss Crump was extremely useful to her, all the more so since she had lost all natural power or wish to rebel.

"I have told you all about Miss Whitburn, so that you may help me to educate her till such a time as she comes out. She will, in the mean time, be very useful to me when visitors are here, for really, Miss Crump, you are getting very dull."

Miss Crump looked down on her book and did not answer. She knew she was dull, and the knowledge was not made less painful by being often reminded of it. Lady Dove, getting no answer from her companion, continued:

"I dislike that way you have of saying nothing, Miss Crump. Dear me, that girl will soon be coming. Sir Evas forgets I shall have all the anxiety about her. She is not related to *me*, but I will not have it said that I ever fail in what is right and charitable toward the penniless."

"Of course not," murmured Miss Crump, who felt bound to answer.

"This girl has been educated somewhere in the colonies. Her father was a doctor; her mother died when she was born. The girl has of course had no advantages. We are her only living relations, and as such we mean to make a small provision for her by giving her a wedding trousseau. She must marry, of course, and naturally she will wish to please us in this respect as in all others."

Lady Dove was not thinking of her companion as she said this, rather she was talking to herself; and the thoughtful expression of her face told Miss Crump plainly enough that her ladyship was making plans. Lady Dove made a great many plans, as her poor companion knew well enough, for the trouble of carrying them out usually devolved upon her.

"She is only sixteen, I think?" murmured Miss Crump.

"Only sixteen! It is a very tiresome age. However, she could, I suppose, marry at seventeen or eighteen. Lady Carew quite recognizes what a great sacrifice I am making in taking a young and penniless relation to live with me."

"You said she could entertain dull people, and walk with Sir Evas, and teach in your village school,

and take messages when you cannot send me," said Miss Crump, without meaning in the least to be sarcastic. Lady Dove looked quickly at her companion, but she saw at once that the human machine meant no harm, so she merely answered:

"Of course she must be useful so as to repay us for taking her in; but you must remember, Miss Crump, that Sir Evas' step-niece is a lady by birth."

Miss Crump blushed a little. She was never allowed to forget that her father had served behind a counter.

"I shall treat her as one of the family," continued Lady Dove. "Sir Evas wishes this; but I expect her to remember that without us she would be at this moment homeless and penniless."

"Poor child!" murmured Miss Crump.

"And why poor child?" said Lady Dove with rising color. Then she recollected that Miss Crump's opinion was of no value at all, and the frightened companion was only thankful that her answer was not waited for, her hard taskmistress continuing angrily, "Go on with your reading, if you please."

When Lady Dove said "if you please" in that tone, it meant that she was in a very bad temper. This was not a very rare occurrence, still Miss Crump had not yet, after all these years of persecution, become accustomed to these words spoken in that tone. These were often followed by petty persecutions, which the poor companion dreaded, though without being able to rebel against them.

She read on and on, the book was dull; but that did not affect Miss Crump very much, for she w

dull herself. "Poor child, poor child," she thought as the winter afternoon slowly drew to its end and the rain pattered drearily against the window, "how will she bear it! She will be too young to—to—acustom herself to this life as I did."

"Leave off, please," said Lady Dove, starting up; "don't you hear the carriage coming? It is very tiresome that Sir Evas has been called away to-day. My life is one long martyrdom. Ever since I married I have had——"

"Shall I go, Lady Dove?" asked Miss Crump.

"Yes, go; no, stay, and presently you can take my niece to her room. Have you seen that everything is ready for her?"

"Yes, Lady Dove."

"When there is no company she will dine with us; on the other days she must dine with you in the sitting-room."

"Thank you," murmured Miss Crump.

"Till I see her I can't tell what other arrangements must be made. Of course if Sir Evas had not insisted on taking her in, nothing would have——"

"The carriage has stopped," said Miss Crump, nervously looking out of the window and catching a glimpse of the two prancing bays, who, as they arched their necks, appeared to think themselves extremely condescending for allowing themselves to be attached to a brougham. "Shall I go and meet Miss Antonia in the hall?"

"Certainly not," said Lady Dove, looking haughtily at her companion, to remind her that she was not to make suggestions.

There was a silence in the large and handsomely furnished drawing-room, the great windows of which looked out into the park; but the beauty was now blurred by fine mist-like rain. The silence seemed quite oppressive to the companion. In spite of herself she felt inclined to cry because a young, perhaps a shy and sensitive, creature was coming to this loveless place. Sir Evas was kind enough, but then Miss Crump never had much to do with him; and a man, because he was a man, always frightened the little companion and made her feel more shy and stupid than she was by nature. Her mind now wandered quickly upstairs to the bedroom and to the sitting-room of the poor relation. She had placed a little bunch of early primroses in a glass on the table so that something homely might meet the girl's eyes; but even this kind thought did not bring its own reward, because Miss Crump had suddenly remembered that she did not know at all whether there were any primroses in Australia or wherever it was Lady Dove's poor relation had passed her youth. Anyhow the cheerless rooms upstairs looked a little brighter for the flowers, and she had done all she could. Lady Dove had selected this dull room for the newcomer because it was out of the way and near Miss Crump's sitting-room, and she felt that it might be very necessary to see as little as possible of the girl whom her husband had, for once in his persecuted life, determined was to come and live at Aldersfield House.

Suddenly the companion's mind had to return from the upstairs regions back to the presence of her employer, who said impatiently:

“What can the girl be doing? Miss Crump, please to ring the bell.”

Before Miss Crump's feeble hand could timidly pull the rope a strange sound was heard in the small adjacent drawing-room. This noise was followed by the bark of a dog, then by the scuffle of feet, then by—Miss Crump positively shuddered—loud merry laughter, then Diggins, the butler, threw the door open and announced, in his usual correct and lugubrious voice, “Miss Whitburn.”

As for Lady Dove, she was nearly paralyzed by the vanguard of sounds she had heard, and from sheer surprise she stood up just before there bounced into the room a black and white terrier with a stumpy tail and an intelligent countenance. He had evidently escaped from his mistress' arms, and, not quite understanding the geography of the new place, he rushed through the first aperture which he could find, this being the space between Diggins' respectable legs. This action on the dog's part nearly caused the stately butler to fall at Lady Dove's feet. Such a fearful catastrophe was only avoided by Diggins' wonderful presence of mind and equally extraordinary power of balancing himself, so that it was only with a strange and very amusing slip forward that the butler brought out the words, “Miss Whitburn.”

It almost looked as if the dog was the individual announced, but then a girlish figure and a young laughing voice was heard ringing out loud and clear from behind Mr. Diggins.

“Oh, Trick! Trick! you naughty dog, come here at once. Oh! dear, how funny that was! Where is

Aunt Dove? Which is Aunt Dove?" for suddenly Miss Crump, being nearest to the new apparition, felt herself seized and kissed before she could struggle backward in order to leave the owner of that terrible title in full sight.

Trick had now sought refuge under the sofa only, keeping his head just protruding from under the valence. This frill surrounded his shaggy ears like the nightcap of Red Riding Hood's wolf-grandmother.

"I am Lady Dove," almost gasped the owner of the title, as she gazed at her husband's half-niece. Then remembering herself, she said to Diggins:

"Diggins, bring in tea at once. Antonia, are you a——"

Only Miss Crump knew what a storm was raging in Lady Dove's breast. In the first place, she hated dogs. In the second, she had been overlooked and the companion called "Aunt Dove." In the third, this strange title had been invented for her and had been heard by Diggins. In the fourth, this extraordinary girl, who laughed and talked quite at her ease, was the poor relation whom she had announced everywhere as a poor young thing she was going to receive into her house out of a true and sublime charity. She had expected a young, quiet, yielding, easily crushed maiden, and she had received a rude awakening. Should she begin at once to put the girl in her place? Yes, this was her best course, and she opened her lips to do this, but Trick, seeing his mistress ready to make another dash at him, began again at this very moment to bark furiously.

"Take the dog out," said Lady Dove, raising her voice; "take it out, Antonia."

"But, Aunt Dove, I can't! When Trick has been in the train his head is always a little turned. He really gets a sort of tiny, tiny madness. We had better not appear to notice him. That is the wisest plan. I didn't kiss you." (Here Antonia performed the difficult ceremony of kissing Lady Dove's two cheeks, while the owner kept her head stiff and sternly straight.)

"Antonia, sit down, please, and tell me where you came from to-day. When did you land? Your Uncle carried on the necessary correspondence about you otherwise——"

"Yes, what an old duck he must be! Where is he?" The companion's hair began to straighten itself, with horror, while a spasm of anger and disgust passed over Lady Dove's face.

"Sir Evas was called away to town to-day."

"Was he? Why, we might have come down together. Do you know, Aunt Dove, he does write such nice letters; just little short ones, you know, but so friendly. I thought he would be a stiff Englishman; but he isn't, is he?"

"When did you land, Antonia?"

Antonia's large eyes opened slowly and serenely. She was beginning to see that something was wrong.

"Land! Oh! a week ago; but the gentleman who brought me over said I ought to be rigged out before coming to a smart place like this."

"The gentleman?" gasped Lady Dove.

"Yes; I think he was a gentleman, at least he looked like one. His father was a miller."

"A miller!"

"Yes; mustn't it be lovely to be a miller! His wife was the jolliest little thing imaginable, and she let me stay with her in London and rigged me out." Antonia looked down on her jacket as if to verify her words.

"Your father must have——"

"Oh! papa knew this gentleman, and said that when I came over he was to take me. Papa was very kind to him once, and Mr. Hilton was awfully grateful. He came over on purpose to bring me. He married a few months ago, and his wife is just as nice as he is. I told them that they were to be sure to come here before they went back to Australia. But they mean to have a good fling in London first."

At this moment Diggins entered with the tea-tray. The footman followed with the kettle, and Lady Dove sank into her chair too much overcome to speak. She was revolving many things in her mind.

"Miss Crump, make the tea, if you please," she said, and Miss Crump obeyed in her usual nervous fashion.

Unfortunately Diggins approached too near the sofa for Trick to resist a dash at his heels, and the peals of laughter this caused from his mistress were more than her ladyship could stand.

"Diggins," she said, "take that dog out!"

"Oh, pray, Mr. Diggins, don't touch him," said Miss Whitburn, starting up; "he'll bite you if you do."

"Take the dog out, Diggins!" repeated Lady Dove.

Whereupon Trick's mistress made a dash at her pet and enveloped him in her arms.

"Be quiet, Trick! You must conform—indeed you must. Now, beg Mr. Diggins' pardon."

"Sit down, Antonia, and drink your tea," said Lady Dove, thus giving poor Diggins the opportunity of hastening away faster than he had done for years. He was mortally afraid of little dogs.

"You mustn't call me Antonia," said Miss Whitburn; "I am afraid I shouldn't remember you meant me. I'm always called Toney; even the Kanakas called me Toney."

"The what?"

"Oh, the aborigines of Australia—at least—no, the labor people, you know. I taught them to read and write. Pups was awfully good to them. They just worshipped him. Some of them thought he was a sort of God, you know."

"Have you had enough to eat," said Lady Dove.

"Yes—no, I think I could finish this cake if you don't think me greedy, and Trick will help me. I think he must be hungry or he wouldn't have bitten Mr. Diggins' heels," and a peal of girlish laughter followed these words—laughter which the venerable Dove drawing-room had not heard for years.

Lady Dove's wrath was gathering, as Miss Crump was well aware, but not so the individual who called it forth.

"Miss Crump, if you please, take Miss Antonia to her room and give the dog to the—to the—to Ernest.

I am going to see if Sir Evas has returned." So saying Lady Dove rose and swept out of the room, leaving Toney to the care of the trembling companion. The mind of Miss Crump can best be described by the word *chaotic*. She did not know if she were on her head or her heels. She had expected something bad to happen, but this was infinitely worse than her wildest imagination had conjectured. Her slow mind faintly foresaw the means that would be used by Lady Dove to break in this girlish spirit, and the vision was saddening to her, all the more so as the culprit appeared perfectly unconscious of what was in store for her. Toney sat for a moment with her face buried in Trick's shaggy coat, then she jumped up.

"I'm ready now, Miss Crump. What a funny name you've got! It's all rather funny here. It's a dull, big place. Plenty of room to ride about, though—but I don't like parks, do you?"

"I'm only a—a—only Lady Dove's companion," stammered poor Miss Crump, feeling that she must not for a moment allow this extraordinary girl to believe that she, Miss Crump, had any part or inheritance in a park.

Toney, as she stood up, holding her dog, could now be seen to full advantage, and Miss Crump, having made her confession, was able to take note of the girl's strong, lithe figure and her well-set head, covered with short curly hair. As far as great beauty was concerned, Toney did not possess it. Her complexion was not good, her nose was rather turned up, but her eyes were as bright as Trick's, while her teeth

were very white and even. When she laughed, insensibly the onlooker felt inclined to join in the merriment, for Toney's one beauty was her mouth and her beautiful, infectious smile. It had not yet infected Lady Dove; on the contrary, it filled her with dismay.

"Well," said Toney, slowly following the poor companion; "well, you are a poor companion and I am a poor relation. I'll tell you what: we'll be chums. We're in the same boat, I imagine."

"Oh! Miss Antonia, Lady Dove will be so—I don't like to say it, but if I may say so, she will be shocked at your names for things."

"Will she? Well, that is a pity! If we are chums, you must just wink at me if I do anything *very* unusual. Pups used to say I gave him surprises; I hope I shan't give you many."

"Your papa," murmured Miss Crump, "is dead, isn't he?" She opened the door of her so-called sitting-room as she said this and Toney followed her. The girl's face was suddenly transformed into an expression Miss Crump had never seen before on the face of a human being as the answer came clear and ringing:

"Oh, no! no! not dead. Christians don't believe in death, do they? Oh, no, papa isn't dead! Now, chum, is this your room? Oh, dear, how dull it is! It wants brushing up. Indeed, it does."

CHAPTER II.

SHE AND HE ARRIVE.

SIR EVAS DOVE found the dogcart waiting for him at Winchley Station when the 6.30 express pulled up with a jerk. He put his venerable head through the first-class carriage window, just to make quite sure it *was* the dogcart and not the brougham. He half-feared his wife would meet him. She did sometimes, when she wanted to make him listen to her for an hour without benefit of escape. No, the dogcart and Jim, the groom, were both waiting, the latter sitting in the stiff, correct fashion so dear to the heart of the English gentleman of property.

Sir Evas gave a sigh of relief and answered the salutes of the stationmaster and of the other officials in quite a friendly manner; and when he found himself by Jim's side, he tucked the rug round his legs with great and evident satisfaction. He knew he could get a good deal of information out of Jim, and could, by delicate manœuvres, find out whether Lady Dove were in a good temper or the contrary, without, of course, allowing his intentions to be seen through.

After a little pause Sir Evas, whose countenance on ordinary occasions beamed with good nature, took a note out of his pocket and read it carefully

through. It was short, and announced the hour at which Miss Whitburn must be expected at Winchley.

"Jim, has the brougham been to the station this afternoon?"

"Iss, Sir Evas," said Jim, as if he were not allowed by law to speak slowly.

"Ah! it fetched Miss Whitburn. I hope she came all right?"

"Iss, Sir Evas," said Jim, again touching his hat, but unable to repress a broad grin.

Sir Evas paused and reflected. His niece had come, that was a fact; and he thought, with a sigh of triumph, of the fight he had gone through with his better half before that lady had consented to let him ask a penniless girl to share his home. Sir Evas had a kind, good face, gentle eyes, a straight nose, and a mouth a little weak; but this weakness was hidden by his mustache and by a short beard, both plentifully besprinkled with gray lines. He was tall and well made, having a military bearing, the result of drilling in the yeomanry. He had no children, and when he heard of the desolate condition of the young Australian relation his heart went out to her. His heart, however, was not one and the same as the heart of his wife, and it was only after a conflict of wills, over which he willingly drew a veil, that Sir Evas had obtained reluctant permission to write to his half-niece and to offer her a home at Aldersfield House. He, too, imagined her a young, delicate, fragile girl, whom he would try to protect, and to whom "poor Miss Crump" might devote some of her

spare time, which idea showed he knew very little of Miss Crump's occupations.

"Did Stephens," began Sir Evas; then he stopped, he could not quite ask Jim how the young lady was received, though doubtless Stephens knew this. Sir Evas was always much surprised about the amount of knowledge the servants possessed as to all kinds of household matters—his household matters he meant.

Presently Jim, after several jerks toward his hat, volunteered a piece of news. It was strange what silent sympathy existed between Sir Evas and his men-servants. They did not say so to him, of course, but they wished him to know how sorry they were for him on certain matters connected with his daily life.

"If you please, Sir Evas, the young lady did not come alone."

"Didn't come alone?" A cold shiver ran down Sir Evas' straight back.

"No, Sir Evas, she brought a little dorg."

"Oh, indeed, I didn't expect that."

"If you please, Sir Evas, the little dorg bit Mr. Stephens." Here Jim's face was considerably widened by a smile.

"Bit Stephens! How shocking!"

"And went for Mr. Diggins' heels." A still broader smile was visible.

"Went for Diggins' heels! Impossible!"

"Mr. Diggins has a great objection to little dorgs, sir."

"Yes, yes, I know; a nervous objection!" To himself Sir Evas was thinking, "What will Melina say?"

So now all the comfort of his drive was over. Not naturally blessed with a vivid imagination, twenty years of married life had given him this inconvenient gift in matters relating to his daily life.

"I am sure Miss Whitburn was very sorry. We must have the dog killed."

"The young lady seemed very fond of the little dorg, Sir Evas."

"Oh, indeed! Yes, of course; still——"

When the dogcart reached the park gates Sir Evas said he would walk home, and told Jim to drive on and to deposit his portmanteau in the hall. "Send word I'm walking home, Jim," he added with authority.

Jim touched his hat and drove on at a smart pace. His mind also was full of thought about the two new arrivals, Sir Evas' niece and "her little dorg as had made Mr. Diggins to run away and Mr. Stephens to use very unreasonable language."

As for Sir Evas, in order to put off the evil day he took a side path toward the house. As he walked on he could not help, as usual, admiring the beauty of his estate, and wishing he had a son to inherit his property. He could catch sight of a lovely sheet of water, now reflecting evening's lights and deep shadows. The hilly land was planted with charming clumps of trees, and here and there the grazing cattle added the necessary touch of life to this English landscape. There was a deep well of kindly feeling in the heart of Sir Evas, and this feeling had to feed on many hidden blessings because of the fear he entertained for—even to himself he hardly dared name

her—Melina, his better half. He had now reached the little iron gate which separated one of the shrubberies from the garden of Aldersfield House. He was carefully securing the iron bolt when he heard a scuffle in the bushes, then a shuffling among last year's leaves, then a bark, and then a girl's voice calling out:

"Oh, you little demon, Trick! Of course, dear, you are a free-born Australian, and you don't like to be a prisoner, do you? No more do I."

"Ahem!" said Sir Evas, clearing his throat in the way he did before addressing a political meeting.

"It's a robber, Trick! Go at him, my boy! A gallant deed you'll do the first night of your arrival. Hi, hi, go at him! No, don't; the man's wearing quite a good coat. I beg your pardon, I couldn't see in this half-light. Trick, come away!" for Trick was flying at his usual tit-bit, the manly heels of an intruder.

"Ahem! Are you — are you — Is this — get off! you——"

"Oh! don't, please," and Sir Evas, who had raised his stick to strike the rude quadruped, found a girlish head almost under his feet, and from whose mouth proceeded infectious laughter.

"I imagine you are my long lost uncle," said Toney, jumping up like a jack-in-a-box and grasping the struggling Trick in her arms. "I thought you were such a good-natured, dear old man, and yet I do believe you were going to strike Trick, my own dear little dog. How do you do? I can't shake hands, you see, as Trick is struggling so."

"Are you—are you Antonia Whitburn?" said Sir Evas, struggling with many conflicting thoughts, mostly turning on what Melina would say to him.

"No, I'm not *Antonia* Whitburn; I'm Toney. The other was only for godfathers and godmothers. Aunt Dove calls me Antonia, but you really mustn't, if we are to be friends. You want us to be friends, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, of course, I'm sure, but——"

"It was really awfully sweet of you to write those nice little notes; we did laugh over them so, Mr. Hilton and I."

"Laughed over them——"

"Yes, because he said you never had written to a girl before; but I said you had, because you must have written to Aunt Dove before you married her."

Sir Evas mentally compared himself to the Queen of Sheba at this moment: there was no strength left in him. He had done this thing. He had insisted that it was his bounden duty to give a home to this orphan relation; but how could he have told that she would be like this? In the agony of the situation, there was but one thing to do, and Sir Evas did it. He burst out laughing, and suddenly Toney joined in. Trick, thinking they were making fun of him, barked viciously. Toney, at last, was the first to "recover," as a drilling-master would say.

"Oh, I am glad you are cheerful! Do you know, I found your big house so dull and stupid that Trick and I rushed out to get a little air? Don't you feel like a prisoner in there? I do."

The worst was, Sir Evas often *did* feel like a pris-

oner, but it was dreadful to be asked the question point-blank.

“My dear child—let me see: you are a child, though somewhat tall—you don’t understand that a young lady, well born and bred, must conform——”

“Conform! How funny of you to use that word! That is what I said to Trick; and do you know, Uncle Dove” (here Toney slipped her arm into that of Sir Evas so that he felt the warm pressure of her small hand), “he never seems to understand the word. I learned it from Mr. Hilton. It’s British, I think. I do try to make him good and obedient, and not so fond of manly heels, but I can’t succeed. Pups said it was a talent born with one.”

“Your father—my poor child——”

“Do say *Toney*, and don’t make speeches! Pups never did. I always called him Pups, you know. I tell you that because you wrote such nice little letters. I suppose Aunt Dove can’t write.”

“On the contrary, my wife is an excellent correspondent.”

“Oh, I see, I’m not worth writing to. You see, I’m only a girl. When is a girl not a girl, Uncle Dove?”

“Oh! never. I’m sure I mean I’ve known so few, and they were all shy and quiet.”

“Dear me, how tiresome! I’m shy sometimes.”

“Are you?”

“Yes, if people won’t understand me.”

“You speak pretty plain; but dear me, Toney” (he fell into the trap quite easily) “don’t go that way:

that path leads to the stable. This one goes round to the garden door."

"Yes, I've been to the stables already, I know."

"It isn't the place for young ladies."

"Why not? But I had to take Trick to apologize to your coachman—what is his name? Oh, yes, Stephens. Trick bit Stephens; only a tiny, tiny little bite, just to show he was friendly to him."

"Friendly to him!"

"Yes, I've often noticed he bites the people he is going to like. He never went near Aunt Dove!"

"I'm very glad," sighed Sir Evas, thinking to himself that at least that subject of reproach would be avoided.

"Well, I was very sorry. It was a bad sign. I fear Aunt Dove does not like girls, and dogs, and all nice things."

"It depends on the girls and the dogs. But what are you supposed to be doing, Toney?"

This question was too much for Toney, and in spite of her proximity to the house she burst out laughing. That laugh was really distracting. It was like the piping of the celebrated piper: every one wanted to follow suit. Sir Evas felt his mouth stretching itself across his furrowed cheeks.

"Pray, quiet yourself, Toney."

"I will, as you say Toney so nicely. You are an old duck. I knew you would be. Isn't it funny? I've got quite a prophetic instinct about people. Pups said it was given to girls who had to fight their way in the world, as I have to do." Toney's voice, which

was very sweet in tone, fell to quite a pathetic key.

"But, Toney, you have us now."

"You mustn't answer for other people, Uncle Dove, it's safer not. I always know my own mind, but I don't know the mind of other people. But I'll tell you what I am supposed to be doing at this very moment: unpacking my evening dress to dine with you?" Here followed another merry peal of laughter.

"Well, why aren't you doing it, Toney? It seems right and proper."

"Do you say so! Well! But I'll tell you, Uncle Dove, the real truth if you don't peach! Do you peach?"

"I am sure——"

"No, I don't think you do. It's safe not, isn't it? We'll make a bargain. I won't peach on you if you are true to me. Take my hand, Uncle Dove, and swear it."

Toney's hand was thrust into his, there was no way of escape.

"I—I never swear," said Sir Evas, quite out of countenance as he felt the firm grasp of the girl's strong fingers.

"You did when you were married, and born, and other occasions. Do, Uncle Dove, make an affirmation if you have conscientious scruples about swearing."

"Oh, I haven't—I mean, of course, when I took my seat."

"Say, I'll be true to you, Toney."

"I hope I always shall be—a gentleman—an English gentleman."

"We don't care about birth, you know, Uncle Dove, out there! It's low to ask what people were. You take a man just as he stands; that is, with his boots on," added Toney, laughing, "because we do draw the line at beggars who won't work."

"I hope, Toney, you'll always find me——"

"All right. That will do, I'll let you off real swearing, you know. It's difficult to choose which is the properest, isn't it? Now I'll tell you, I'm not going to dine with you this evening because I've got no evening frock! We all forgot that when Mr. Hilton rigged me out. We really did. He said you'd have a smart place, too."

"Oh, never mind your frock; of course, you must dine," said Sir Evas, to whom the idea of not dining late meant chaos.

"Oh, I'll sup with my chum, Crump! I told her she was a 'poor companion.' No, she said that—I wouldn't call anybody names, would you?—and I said I was a 'poor relation.'"

"No, no, my niece is entitled to——"

"But I am. You know I haven't a penny! Pups didn't make much money; always would give it away. We just dropped it into a box, and then either of us came and dipped into the store. He said once it was a bad way, but we never altered and it was awfully convenient. It was like the widow's cruse, you know—never dry. Then when he died somebody said what remained belonged to him. Mr.

Hilton did begin a lawsuit for me, but I'm a minor, and out there 'orphins' haven't much chance, and, altogether, I'm not very rich."

"Of course I'll give you an allowance, Toney, and you shall never want for necessaries."

"That's real kind, Uncle Dove, but rather rash. I want so many things. However, I really mean to earn my board and keep."

"Earn it! Of course not."

"Oh, yes, I shall. I'm not a beggar. I can do lots of things, you'll see. I know all about horses: we had to keep two always for Pups and me, and I can milk cows. I don't mind getting up early to milk yours, if you like."

"Oh, that's enough, Toney. Yes, I'm sure if necessary you will earn your livelihood; in the meanwhile, I would prefer giving it to you."

"You are generous, I'm glad. It's like Pups. But it doesn't come from your side of the family. Pups said the Doves looked down on his mother because she wasn't anybody particular, but she was particularly nice, he said. She gave away right and left, and then, you know, he was like her and got into trouble, and he also married just nobody in particular."

"Family matters should be private," almost groaned Sir Evas.

"I thought it would interest you, Uncle Dove. Pups hadn't a happy life, you know."

"Ah, yes, of course," said Sir Evas.

"Well, I wasn't very sorry, because I got papa to myself. Oh, Pups was ten thousand in one!"

"Ah! yes, but here we are, Toney. If you go in here I think I'll go round to the front. My wife may be looking out for me."

Toney laughed. She thought the idea delightfully comical.

"I say, Uncle Dove, you won't be prejudiced against me, will you?"

"Prejudiced? Of course not, but I—I don't know—" Before he could finish his sentence Toney had disappeared with Trick in her arms, and her unfortunate uncle hurried to the front of his own mansion.

He walked up the steps and turned one moment to look at "the noble prospect," as the local newspapers called it, to be seen from the hall door; and then, with a sigh, he walked indoors with a proud and stately step, though with deep humility in his heart. Was his wife dressing for dinner, or was she waiting for him in the drawing-room? He entered, trying cheerfully to clear his throat.

"Melina! Melina, dear!"

"I am here, Evas. Your niece has arrived."

"Ah, indeed, has she?" Poor Sir Evas positively did not dare own that he had seen her, though he knew this deception might cost him dear.

"Yes, and she is——" Lady Dove stopped short.

"Well—she is not tired, I hope?"

"No, she is not tired. Evas, she is terrible, quite terrible, and I wish you had the breaking in of her."

"Oh, no, no! Indeed I am sure, so young—my dear,

don't distress yourself. It will be quite right—she has no home, she is an orphan.”

“An orphan! I only hope, Evas, that there are not many such! Remember, Evas, you brought her here, not I. I'll dress for dinner now, and I hope you won't be late.”

CHAPTER III.

AN EVENING DRESS.

BEFORE Sir Evas was ready the dinner-gong sounded through the house, and he hurried down as soon as he could, wondering how he should let his wife know that he had already met Toney.

Lady Dove was very particular about the observation of all the daily ceremonies of life, and dinner was a very solemn affair. The butler and the two footmen went through their several duties with as much pomp as if royalty were present, and Sir Evas was glad enough to-night that their presence prevented his wife from telling him what she thought of the new arrival. But all too soon the husband and wife were left alone, and, as he expected, the storm burst upon him.

"I had better tell you at once, Evas, that you have brought a perfectly mad, wild girl into this house—and she has brought a mad dog with her."

"No, no, my dear, I hope not indeed; I trust you are mistaken."

"I am not at all mistaken, Evas; I told Antonia to come down to dinner, but you see how she has obeyed me."

Sir Evas knew the reason, but he could reveal nothing, so he only murmured:

"As it is the first night, dear, I dare say she is tired."

"Tired! I wish she were; and, after all, she only came from London, and not from Australia, to-day."

"No, dear, I did not say so, did I? I never expected such a thing. But in a strange place, naturally a little shyness——"

"Shyness! Oh, Evas! pray don't talk in that way. You have not seen her or you would not talk of shyness!"

Sir Evas wondered why he had used this inappropriate word, but again his lips were closed.

"While waiting for you I have been thinking deeply about the future, and I shall expect you to help me."

"Of course, dear; I always do, I hope."

"Always do! How have you helped me by bringing this mad creature here? No, Evas, you are really too trying."

"I really didn't mean to be, my dear. What is the matter with her?"

"Matter with her? What isn't the matter with her? Even poor, silly Crump is scandalized."

"I wonder at that," said Sir Evas thoughtfully. He had never discovered any feeling which could be called by a special name in the frightened companion.

"You won't wonder long when you see her." Hardly had she said these words when there was a shuffle heard outside, and then smothered laughter behind the dining-room door.

Sir Evas lifted his head, as if by thus doing he could unravel the mystery; but Lady Dove turned her head

sharply toward him, and exclaimed, "What's that?" One moment, and then, gravely and solemnly, in came a lady, dressed in a short, skimpy, and very old-fashioned muslin skirt, over which was printed the ancient of ancient cashmere shawl patterns, somewhat like an ornamental number six written backward.

The bodice was very short-waisted, and some puffy, short sleeves finished the costume, save for a very broad sash fastened in a huge bow behind. Toney looked for all the world like a sweet great-aunt we know so well in pictures, for her hair was done up with a comb six inches high, and the hair dragged off the pretty nape.

"Ahem!" said Sir Evas, looking with unfeigned admiration at the quaint picture before him. He dared not say more.

"Good heavens!" cried Lady Dove. "Antonia, what have you got on? Don't you see Sir Evas?"

"Well, Aunt Dove, I was trying to see you and uncle at dinner, but you know you said I was to dress for dinner. Well, I couldn't dress, because I had no evening dress, it wasn't part of my rigging out; but after supper, chum, Miss Crump I mean, hunted up her pet hoards and let me do myself up. She showed me her great-aunt's picture and lent me her dress, and I really copied it exactly. Your humble servant, Uncle Dove." Toney made a graceful curtsey—that is, as graceful as her very narrow skirt allowed her—and then laughed again as she dragged a very heavy, solemn-looking chair to the table.

"Antonia, what can you be dreaming of? How

can you dress in a garment worn by Miss Crump's great-aunt! It is dreadful! She may have died of—any disease. They are not at all particular in that class of life.”

“Dear Miss Crump aired it; she did indeed, for it did smell rather mouldy. I wanted to dress her up in something too and bring her down, but I couldn't induce her to follow my example. She is so funnily shy and wants bringing out, you know; but I couldn't wait to do that now as I was afraid of missing Uncle Dove.”

“I hope you had a pleasant journey,” said poor Sir Evas, “and that you feel rested.” Toney's present demeanor was so correct that his hopes rose. After all, she might not be quite as— Well, as he feared, for at this moment she answered him quite demurely:

“Thank you, uncle, I had a very pleasant journey, though I was sorry to lose my kind friends and to—” She pulled up short.

“Antonia, finish your sentence; it is very ill-bred to begin something and not to end it,” said Lady Dove.

“I was going to say, I was sorry to come here, Aunt Dove; then I thought it might hurt your feelings, because Miss Crump says you have kindly taken me in, and that she is to tell everybody that.”

Lady Dove turned a little pink.

“Miss Crump is very impertinent to repeat what——”

“Oh, she didn't mean to; but I asked her what you had said about my coming, and she got so confused that I thought it was something worse. She said you liked being obeyed, so I tried to do it, you see

by putting on this dress. Uncle Dove, don't touch my sash by mistake, because that is all I have to keep me together. Miss Crump's great-aunt had a very refined waist. Mine isn't at all slim, and the body won't meet behind."

"I hope, Toney——"

"Pray! Sir Evas! Antonia——"

"Really, my dear Melina, Antonia is rather long for everyday use. I was going to say, Toney, that I hope you will do everything to please your aunt and that you will give her no trouble."

Toney looked up from under her eyelashes in a suspiciously demure fashion.

"I'm very grateful to you, Uncle Dove and Aunt Dove, for taking me in, a poor orphan girl; and I hope by my conduct to repay you for all your kindness."

Lady Dove was not sure if Toney were laughing at her, but as there was not a smile on her face she said nothing till Sir Evas burst out laughing. The demure look was too much for his sense of fun, remembering as he did the girl's conduct in the shrubbery.

"Why, Toney, you must have learned that speech by heart!"

"Yes, I did. You are a dear to guess it. It came out of a little tract a good lady gave me on board, and I thought I would learn it for fear I should want it here, and you see I was right."

Lady Dove changed the conversation.

"It is not easy to get masters here, Antonia, so I hope you will try and read by yourself.

I suppose your education has been very much neglected."

"Shockingly!"

"It is very terrible. Do you know *anything*? I suppose you can read?"

"Yes, I *can* read," and Toney looked down very humbly.

"Does that mean you never do?" asked Sir Evas, who was a constant reader of *The Times*, but of nothing else.

"Aunt asked me if I *could* read. May I take some of these macaroons for Trick? He does love them so much. He's gone to bed now, but I made him ask Mr. Diggins' and Mr. Stephens' pardon first."

"Ah! where is your dog?"

"Pray, Evas, don't ask about that animal. He must be poisoned, Antonia."

Toney's face turned scarlet.

"Never! Trick poisoned! Whoever poisons Trick must give me the same dose."

"Antonia, how shocking! Pray, do not let me hear such heathenish sentiments. I am afraid your intercourse with these deluded people has upset your principles. I must see that you are put under regular instruction from our clergyman."

"It's very kind of you," said Toney, recovering her cheerful spirits. "Is he a nice young minister?"

"A clergyman of the Church of England. The parish is in our gift."

"Our last one wasn't a success. They starved him away," said Toney, meditatively.

"Starved him! Oh!"

"Oh, not really. They wouldn't pay him his money, that's all. Then he had to go."

Lady Dove now rose, but Toney, seeing her uncle still sitting at table, did not move from her chair.

"Antonia, have you been taught *no* manners? Ladies never stay behind with the gentlemen."

"Oh! don't they? I thought I would like a little chat alone with uncle, but I'll come." She jumped up suddenly, but this haste resulted in an ominous noise which set one's teeth on edge. The great-aunt's evening gown suddenly slit for a considerable length.

"Oh, dear! What will Miss Crump say? It's a relic, you know, Aunt Dove. It's like my little collection of hair."

"Of hair!"

"A little *souvenir* of all the horses we had out there. They are all so distinct. I keep them in a packet; but I had better go to bed, now that I've split this lovely frock. Good-night, Uncle Dove."

She stooped down and kissed him and whispered in his ear:

"Don't forget your swear, Uncle Dove."

"Good-night—ahem! and I hope you will sleep well and—and quietly."

Toney managed to get out of the room without further misfortune by taking tiny steps, but outside she found herself captured. Lady Dove took hold of her arm.

"Antonia, this is your first day; I shall therefore overlook your extraordinary conduct, but I wish to say——"

"Oh, do say 'to be continued in our next,' as our

newspapers write. Aunt Dove, I'm so sleepy. I'll go to bed now. Good-night." Lady Dove dared not keep hold of the rotten muslin sleeve, fearing it would come off in her hand.

"Tell Miss Crump to come down to me. I think you *had* better go to bed."

"Oh, Miss Crump is very sleepy, too. She said so. Must she come down?"

"Antonia, I am accustomed to be obeyed. Good-night."

There was no kiss to her now, only a cold handshake, and even Toney did not attempt to hug her aunt. She shuffled out as best she could in her tight skirt, but the effort made her laugh so that Lady Dove heard the echo of this dreadful merriment till it reached Miss Crump's sitting-room. A few minutes after the poor companion sidled in as if she were ashamed of her own existence, and indeed she was trembling with fear.

"I hope, Lady Dove," began Miss Crump, "that you don't imagine that I—I——"

"I imagine nothing, Miss Crump. I saw how you had abetted Miss Whitburn to come down dressed like a mountebank. In future I hope you will restrain this undisciplined young girl."

"I am afraid I am not capable," began poor Anne Crump, feeling that she could not possibly undertake this new duty.

"No, you are not at all capable. I am always saying so. If it were not for me, I am sure there would be nothing for you but the workhouse—nothing. Now, please, read till Sir Evas comes in. No, I thin'

I wish you to write some notes. Something *must* be done. A girl of sixteen is most difficult to control. Mr. Hales' sister is only a year older. I suppose that she still studies."

"She is very fond of reading."

"As you sometimes go there, Miss Crump, you must know their hours. If I sent Antonia there every morning, would it be possible——"

"Mrs. Hales is a very kind old lady, but I only know her slightly."

"I do dislike that habit you have of never answering a direct question."

"Miss Hales visits the poor for her brother and looks after her mother, I know, but I have never been in the house."

"I don't keep you here to spend your time elsewhere, of course. Yes, I think you might take Antonia down to the Vicarage every morning and she might study with Miss Hales."

"Yes, of course, if you like, Lady Dove."

"I suppose they will want to be paid highly, but that would be cheaper than having a master from town or from Winchley. Yes, that will do. Then in the afternoon, let me see. She must walk out with Sir Evas from two till four; then tea, if visitors are not with us. Then study from six to eight, then dinner or supper. Yes, then bed. Sit down, Miss Crump, and make out this time-table for Antonia and write in my name to Mrs. Hales. They are as poor as mice; they won't refuse such a good offer. Also, Miss Crump, I shall expect you, if you please, to see that this time-table is kept."

"What time should Miss Antonia get up?" asked Miss Crump, balancing a pen in her limp fingers. One of her few merits—in Lady Dove's eyes at least—was a beautiful handwriting. Miss Crump had no right to possess an aristocratic calligraphy, but she had that possession, and it was very useful to Lady Dove. Indeed most persons thought it was her own and quoted her to less fortunate writers.

"Get up? Well, yes, she had better get up rather late. She can't get into mischief if she is in bed. But, of course, I shall soon tame her—very soon."

"Yes, Lady Dove. Half-past eight, shall I say?"

"Yes. Breakfast at half-past nine. Prayers at twenty minutes past nine. At ten-fifteen you can start to the Vicarage. It will be very inconvenient to spare you just then, so you must hurry back as soon as possible. You understand, Miss Crump—hurry back as soon as possible?"

"Yes, Lady Dove. I must hurry back as soon as possible." Miss Crump was reviewing all she would have to squeeze in if she took this walk.

Lady Dove dictated the letter to Mrs. Hales, and giving orders that Jim was to take it to the Vicarage the first thing in the morning and to wait for an answer, she then dismissed Miss Crump with a nod of her head and a muttered "good-night."

As the companion passed through the second drawing-room she almost fell into the arms of Sir Evas.

"Ahem! I beg your pardon, Miss Crump. By the way," and Sir Evas laughed in a low tone, "so your great-aunt's waist was very slim, was it, Miss Crump?"

Miss Crump blushed peony red.

"Yes, I am afraid it was, Sir Evas. I am very sorry——"

"I hope you will soon find another dress for Miss Toney, one rather bigger, you know. How do you make them bigger; with more material, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, Sir Evas; you don't *gore* them so much," said Miss Crump, fancying Sir Evas really wanted this piece of information. "Miss Antonia's waist is a more natural size, or else——"

A distant sound of Lady Dove's short, dry cough now made Miss Crump slip past Sir Evas without another word of explanation.

"Evas," said the baronet's wife when he entered the drawing-room, "I have several things to say to you."

"Yes, of course, my dear. I was going to remark before you spoke that you must get a new frock for To— Antonia." His courage forsook him at the very beginning of the word.

"I have several old ones that will do for her, and that foolish Crump can make them up, or else Rivett. Antonia must be kept in the background till she is seventeen, and then we must marry her off."

"Ah, yes, kept in the background—very proper for the young, but still with only one it is difficult, isn't it? And with this one——"

"I suppose, Evas, you are not going to pretend that you know how to bring up a young lady, at least if that term *can* be applied to this girl. I have

just drawn out a time-table for her, and I have sent down to the Hales to see if they will teach her in the morning."

"Ah! an excellent plan. Hales is a very nice fellow."

"And that stupid mother and that quiet sister will do her no harm. I shall offer them——"

"Pray be liberal, Melina. Hales is a gentleman by birth."

"I shall certainly not allow any one to say we are mean, Evas! Leave me to mind my own business. I shall tame this girl, never fear. It is my *duty*, and I shall not shrink from it."

"My dear Melina, I never thought that you would."

"She can ride or walk with you every day, Evas, from two till four, and I hope you will not spoil her in any way, and that you will make her behave properly for my sake, if not for your own."

"She can't do much harm for two hours, just pottering round by the farms."

"I'm tired out with all this," sighed Lady Dove. "I have had severe shocks to my nervous system. In future——"

"By the way, do you know that young Lewis Waycott is coming to live at Waycott Hall? They say he means to marry and to settle down. The aunts who brought him up are coming to the Hall, and the widow brings her daughters."

"Humph! Mrs. Hamilton means her eldest daughter to marry her cousin. Such a designing woman! I've no patience with her."

“My dear Melina! A charming widow—in-deed——”

“Good-night, Evas. I am going to bed.”

Upstairs the little companion crept slowly to her bedroom, which was very bare and homely, considering its surroundings. Next to this room was the one set apart for the poor cousin.

“Poor child! poor child!” said the little companion, pausing at the door; “but how am I to make her keep this time-table?” Already Miss Crump felt as if she were thrown into another sphere. Something new had come into her life. Was it something pleasant or the reverse? But she still felt Toney’s kiss on her pale, thin cheek, which no one had kissed since she had entered this mansion.

The little companion stopped in her prayers as she said, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Bread she had received for years. She wanted a little—a very little butter with it now!

CHAPTER IV.

AN EARLY SCHOLAR.

ANTONIA woke early and jumped out of bed to look at the view. Trick was asleep, so she would not wake him for fear of his barking.

Her room was on the second story of the big house and was provided only with a bed, a table, two chairs, and a chest of drawers; but it had one beauty—a lovely view over the lake and the park, which could be seen from a deep circular seat round a bay window. From here the carriage-drive was visible, and the front door with its steps and its portico could also be overlooked. Aldersfield House was by no means romantic-looking or picturesque, but it was large and substantially built. Except where beautiful creepers covered it, it had no special charm, such at least was Toney's verdict.

The girl looked for a few moments at the glistening water, over which the sun was rising. Then she gazed at the distant wood, now becoming tinged with green, and at the near clumps of trees, after which she made this private comment:

“Well, it's pretty. Pups said it was, but gracious stars! it's dull. There's a village, I know, and an old Norman church. Pups told me so. I expect

there'll be people like the Kanakas there. I'll go and see. I wonder if chum's awake?" Toney looked at her watch. It was early, but the spring morning was fine and Toney's spirits were refreshed and heightened by her night's sleep. "Yes, chum is rather dull. She wants to be poked at. I think she and Aunt Dove—humph! I wonder if I shall some day get to be like chum? I hope not," and the idea made Toney burst out laughing, and then remembering that most likely chum was asleep and might perhaps be awakened by her voice, she buried her face in the pillow till she became grave again. When she had finished dressing she opened her door, and walking on tiptoe down one of the flights of stairs leading to the first landing, she paused outside her aunt's room.

"She's asleep," she thought; "what a pity Aunt Dove isn't a 'Sleeping Beauty.' Uncle Dove and I could have rare times, then. Well, never mind. Pups used to say, 'make the best of the inevitable.' I've got to do that, and Aunt Dove is certainly the inevitable."

Having thus moralized, Toney ran down into the central hall. She already seemed familiar with the geography of the house, having the preceding day explored a good deal during dinner-time after she had dressed herself in her strange costume.

There was now a housemaid kneeling on her knees upon the marble floor, and she looked up with surprise at seeing the young lady already up and coming downstairs.

"What's your name?" said Toney, sitting down on the last stair, close beside the housemaid.

"Jane, Miss."

"Do you like being on your knees rubbing so hard, Jane? I used to clean our hall at home, and it was fun. I liked it awfully much."

Jane giggled.

"It's my work, Miss. Mrs. Stone, the 'ead 'ousemaid, is very particular about this marble, so I gets up a bit earlier to get more time to make it shine."

"Every day?"

"Yes, Miss, every day."

"I never did ours but once a week, then a Kanaka came to help. It was rather boiling weather at my home, you know."

"You're going to live 'ere, aren't you, Miss?"

"I've got to live here, Jane, because, you see, I'm a poor relation, but when you want to give warning I think I'll offer for the place. I like getting up early and I like scrubbing."

"Oh, Miss!"

"I'm going to see the cook now. Is she very—sugar and molasses?"

"Mrs. 'Omes is a bit sharp at times, Miss, but I don't have much to do with 'er. We each 'as our own work."

"That's dull, I like a change; so, Jane, mind you ask me to take your work some day. Good-by for the present," and Toney graciously held out her hand, quite disconcerting poor Jane, who looked hopelessly at her soiled fingers shyly before offering her hand in turn.

Toney next made a dash at the swing door, then she ran down some stone passages, and after several twists and turns she found herself in the large kitchen.

"Where's Mrs. 'Omes?" she called out. There was only a kitchen maid visible, and she was scrubbing down a deal table.

"She isn't down yet, Miss. Is there anything wanted?" Rose, the kitchen maid, looked as frightened as if she had seen a ghost.

"Wanted! Yes! I want something to eat. Bread and butter will do, but a piece of cold pie would be nice."

Rose was quite unable to give Toney pie, but she placed the kitchen loaf and some butter before the young lady, who, drawing a chair near to the table, sat down to eat her simple fare.

"Tea would be nice, wouldn't it?" she remarked.

"Shall I go up and ask Mrs. 'Omes, Miss?"

"Oh, dear, what a prison this is! Don't you all help yourselves? We did at home."

At this moment Mrs. Homes sailed into the kitchen, attired in a very clean and very rustling print dress.

"Lor!" she exclaimed in spite of herself, as her eyes fell on Toney eating bread and butter.

"Good-morning, Mrs. 'Omes," said Toney, jumping up and holding out her hand. "I'm going to the village, and you know it's bad to go out on an empty stomach. Papa, who was a doctor, you know, used to say so. Do you think that, too?"

"Dear me, Miss, of course, but I didn't expect a young lady——"

"Oh, I'm not one, you know, Mrs. 'Omes. I'm

only a poor relation, but you see that doesn't prevent me feeling dreadfully hungry. When you were sixteen, didn't you feel hungry?"

Something in Toney's earnestness always conquered servants. Her freedom with them was too natural for them to think it was put on, or that she was condescending toward them.

"Well, Miss, when I was sixteen I expect—but I'll make you a cup of tea in half a minute. Rose, fetch the little teapot and make haste with the tea caddy."

"You are a ducky, Mrs. Homes. I really thought at first you were called 'Omes, but I see now it's Homes. But if it's any trouble, don't. If you just put a little store of something every evening under that dish cover, I'll come and take it when I get up, and then I shall be independent. Chum—no, Miss Crump—said you didn't breakfast till half-past nine here. I should be dead by that time if I didn't eat. How do you manage?"

"Oh! we have ours at eight, Miss. My lady's very particular about meals being regular."

"Oh, dear! I never did like regular meals, but I mean to try to be punctual. Where's your husband, Mrs. Homes?"

"I never was married, Miss." Mrs. Homes did not much like saying this, but there was no way out of it but the truth and she put a good face on the matter.

"Why do they call you Mrs.? That means people are married."

"It's the fashion, Miss. Ladies wouldn't like it otherwise."

"The fashion! What fashion? When shall I be

Mrs. Toney? That would be funny! Now I've had lots, dear Mrs. Homes. You *are* sugar and molasses. I asked Jane if you were, so now I'll go out. Did you hear about Trick?"

"Mr. Diggins told us, Miss. He wasn't over-pleased."

"I hope he didn't let the sun go down upon his wrath! That's wrong. I don't know whether to take Trick or not with me. Better not, perhaps, this morning! I'm going to see the Kanakas."

"Are you, Miss?" asked Mrs. Homes, who never acknowledged ignorance.

"Yes, good-by. It's down the avenue and turn to the left, isn't it?"

"That's the village, Miss, a mile from here or more. Mr. Hales is a nice gentleman. He's our clergyman, quite a young gentleman."

"I'll go and see. Thank you and good-by." Here Toney shook hands violently with the cook. "I should like to breakfast with you here some day. In Australia we all chummed together because it was more convenient to my papa."

Mrs. Homes was too much surprised to answer much, and it was only when Toney had disappeared through a side door that she exclaimed:

"Good gracious, Rose! She's the queerest young lady I've seen, and yet one can see she is a lady with all her odd ways."

"She's eat up all that butter," said Rose a little sorrowfully.

Toney was not yet out of the house, however. The morning was so lovely that she could not go without

Trick, and finding some back stairs she managed to get back to her room without meeting any one. Earnestly begging Trick to behave himself, she ran down again; and once out, Trick, barking for joy, ran by her side all down the great avenue. For the time being they were as happy as possible, and for a little while Toney forgot there was an Aunt Dove living in the same world as herself.

"If only Pups was here," said Toney, stopping short for want of breath, "but there is very little time, I guess, and I must find out something more cheerful than this park. England is a dull place, a very dull place. I wonder why Mr. Hilton wanted to come back so much?"

At last the village was reached, and Toney smiled with pleasure as she opened the park gate leading out into the village. Suddenly she saw a little girl about six years old jog-trotting in the same direction as herself; but this little maiden, very unlike Toney, was sobbing bitterly as if her heart would break. Toney pounced upon her.

"What are you crying for, ducky?"

"I shall be late, I shall be—la-a-a-te for school."

"Late! Whatever time do you begin—I've not begun my school yet."

"I shall be late t' school," repeated the child.

"I'll take you there, then. Give me your hand. Now we'll run." Trick wanted some fun too, and the three running on together, one barking, one laughing, and one crying, made the cottagers come to their doors to see the sight.

From one of the cottages, however, a child ran out

"It's Minnie Thomas with the leddy," the small being exclaimed.

"We're late for school," said Toney; "we mustn't stop."

"School don't begin for an hour yet, Miss," said the child. "What be you crying for, Minnie?"

"I shall be late t' school," repeated the tiny girl.

"Oh, she mistook the time, Miss. She ain't got no mother, and last week teacher punished her for being late. 'Tain't late, Minnie." Minnie's little bosom still sobbed and heaved, and it took some few minutes clearly to explain her mistake to her. Indeed, it was only when Toney lifted her bodily, putting her pick-a-back, that a smile succeeded to the sobs.

Toney wanted to see more, so, with the child on her back, she ran on.

"Keep on tight, Minnie, and show me the school." Minnie could do that, and some low chuckles succeeded her sobs as many villagers ran out to see the young leddy with Minnie Thomas on her back.

"Well, you see it's too early for school, Minnie. Show me the church and where your clergyman lives." Minnie's little squeaky voice guided her new horse admirably. This was the proudest day of her life; and when she had conducted her beast of burden down a lane, now fragrant with violets, she pointed her small fat finger at some swing-gates.

"Mr. 'Ales lives there, and 'e's coming."

It was true. The swing-gate was flung open and a young clergyman found himself face to face with the extraordinary sight of a young lady bent half double under the weight of Minnie Thomas.

"Good gracious!" he muttered; then, quite unable to know whether first to address the horse or the rider, he stood still and laughed.

Toney laughed too, and sitting down on the bank deposited her burden.

"You're Mr. 'Ales. That's what they call you. Good-morning, Mr. Hales. I came to see the village and the places of interest here. There's none at Aldersfield House."

Mr. Hales at once jumped to a right conclusion as to the identity of the speaker, for there had already been a family consultation over Lady Dove's note.

"Miss Antonia Whitburn," he repeated.

"No, Toney, that's what I answer to. I picked up this little one, but she is hungry, I'm sure. Does crying make you hungry, Mr. Hales? It does me. When I cried, the cook at home had to bake two loaves extra."

"Oh!" said the Vicar, "have you come for the answer to Lady Dove's note? I sent it by the groom."

"What note? Was it a note of surprise?" Toney laughed happily.

"A note about you—but perhaps if Lady Dove——"

"Oh, I know," exclaimed Toney, "she said last night you were to strengthen my principles. Are you good at that sort of thing?"

Mr. Hales was quite unable to keep his countenance.

"Anyhow, your principle of kindness won't want strengthening, I'm sure. You have been very kind to little Minnie. Come in, if you don't mind, and my sister will give the child some breakfast, and you too, if you will."

"I've had mine, thanks, in the kitchen; but Minnie will be delighted. I didn't expect to pick up a little wandering Kanaka, but I'm glad I did."

"Kanaka! Ah!"—Mr. Hales remembered just in time—"Australia, of course," he added.

"They are so odd, and just like a sort of dumb animal that can talk. Is your sister at breakfast?"

"We breakfast early." He was leading the way up a laurel-bordered path, all the while wondering what his mother and sister would say to this strange specimen, which to him, however, appeared delightfully original. Moreover, the girl's evident love of children had won his heart. Suddenly the Vicarage came into view. It was an extremely pretty house, with gables and bow windows, and the garden was made beautiful by the care of loving hands, and not only by those of a hired gardener.

Spring flowers made the borders gay. There were hyacinths, primroses, a few crocuses still lingering, jonquils, anemones, winter heath in full flower, apricots and peaches in bloom against a distant wall. Close by one could see a patch of large, deep-blue gentians, also some grape hyacinths trying to look proud, and squills slightly nodding in the tiny breeze, and in all the nooks and corners were violets filling the air with their sweet scent.

"Oh!" said Toney, "gracious stars, how pretty!"

The Vicar fairly laughed.

"So you don't know Lady Dove's proposal, Miss Whitburn?"

"Something Trick and I shall growl at, I expect. To heel, Trick. He is looking at your heels, Mr.

Hales; if he goes at them, don't mind. It's a sign of respect. He took all the blacking off Mr. Diggins' shoes, Aunt Dove's butler, you know."

Trick hearing the word heel resisted no longer, and the Vicar felt his sign of respect in all its fulness, till Toney again had recourse to reproaches, and was forced to drag him bodily away.

"He's very intelligent," said Mr. Hales, still laughing. "Come this way please." He passed through a open French window and shouted, "Mother!"

A gray-haired lady, who was still very pretty, came hastening in.

"Mother, I must introduce Miss Whitburn to you. You know little Minnie Thomas. She mistook the school-hour and wants some breakfast. Miss Whitburn kindly carried her down the village street."

"How very kind of you. Silvia! Silvia! Here, my dear."

Toney stood almost mute looking round at the pretty room and at the sweet-faced lady. Beauty in any shape always silenced Toney—for a minute. Silvia Hales soon entered. She was a fragile-looking girl of seventeen, much too grave and silent for her years. A constitutional delicacy had made her languid and quiet. It was often difficult to make her take an interest in any one besides her mother, whom she idolized.

"Silvia, this is Miss Whitburn, whom we have been talking about, and here is little Minnie Thomas wanting some breakfast. Cook will give her something nice to eat if you take her to the kitchen."

Silvia held out a thin white hand to Toney, wh

looked at it before shaking it. It seemed so fragile that Toney felt as if she were touching china that might break.

"Whatever did Aunt Dove write to you about?" she asked.

The three looked at each other, and then Silvia answered.

"Lady Dove wants you to do lessons with me. But we can't afford masters; mother and Cecil teach me."

Toney pulled a long face, and then laughed with that clear, silvery laugh of hers.

"You had better say 'no'; Pups never found any one who would teach me. I can't bear sitting still for long, and if I come Trick must come too, and he's already gone at Mr. Hales' heels, hasn't he?" Toney flung back her curly hair and looked up at Mr. Hales, whilst Silvia took off little Minnie to the kitchen. Mrs. Hales' face showed a mixture of amusement and surprise which she tried in vain to conceal.

"I am afraid we have already accepted," said the Vicar smiling.

"That's a pity. Why did you do it without seeing me?"

Mrs. Hales' sweet face smiled now in good earnest.

"You see, Lady Dove's money will help us with Amy's schooling."

"Is Amy another of you?"

"Yes, another of us. My youngest sister who is at school," said the Vicar. "Mother, I must go now. I have a good deal to do before luncheon time."

"Perhaps I'd better go too," said Toney, starting up

and looking at a large gold watch stuck in her waist-band. "I shall have to run all the way. Do you know if Aunt Dove is punctual? I don't think uncle looks punctual, but you can't tell from outside looks, can you?"

Silvia came back at this minute.

"Minnie is eating some bread and jam, but she is still anxious about being in time."

"I'll take her back then," said Toney. "She can eat as she walks along and then I'll run. Good-by. It's very kind of you to—no, I don't know if it is. I'm afraid you've only done it for the money."

Mrs. Hales took the girl's hand.

"I am afraid we did only think of that. You are right, Miss Whitburn, but—"

"I expect," said Toney, "you'll repent, but I've warned you. Still you look rather jolly—Trick, come along. I wonder if you'll let Miss Crump come sometimes? She's very badly educated, she says."

"Miss Crump?" Mrs. Hales only just knew the poor companion by sight.

"Oh, don't you know her? She's rather sleepy. Want's waking up in fact; but she's nice inside I expect. Do you know she put such nice primroses in my room and picked them herself."

"I'll go part of the way with you, Miss Whitburn," said the Vicar, and in another moment the strange cavalcade started toward the village school—Minnie still munching bread and jam, Trick with an eye on the Vicar's heels, and Toney with one eye on him and another on Minnie's jam, for fear it should go on her pinafore.

CHAPTER V.

A WILD COLT.

SIR EVAS had said family prayers, and the long row of servants was filing and rustling out when Toney ran in, looking very red in the face and almost too much out of breath to speak.

“Oh, dear, Uncle Dove! have you done?”

“Antonia,” said Lady Dove horrified, “where have you been? After breakfast you must come with me and listen to the time-table which I have drawn out for you. On it you will see that we have prayers at twenty minutes past nine.”

“Time-table!” said Toney going up to Miss Crump, who, pale and frightened, was wondering what punishment would be found for such an irregularity on the part of the newcomer. “But what’s the use of a time table, Aunt Dove; I’m not a train!”

Sir Evas’ face broadened perceptibly.

“I have not shown it yet to Miss Antonia,” murmured Miss Crump. “When I went to her room she had gone.”

Toney now delivered a very audible kiss upon Miss Crump’s pale cheek, and passed on to deposit another on her uncle’s tanned countenance.

“Good-morning, Uncle Dove! No one told me

about family prayers; at least if they did I've forgotten, but I ran all the way! Good-morning, Aunt Dove; it's just a glorious morning, and one wants to sniff it up all the time."

Lady Dove's face only partly expressed what she felt, as she slightly turned her reluctant cheek toward "this dreadful girl"—this title being the one she silently gave her.

"Sniff what up, Antonia? What an expression! Pray, do not use it again."

"Oh, the smell of the ground, you know. Each land seems to have its own smell. Australia doesn't smell like England at all. I expect that is what Pups—Papa meant, when he said he wanted a sniff of the old country so bad again."

"Very extraordinary! Sit down and begin your breakfast. Miss Crump, will you cut some bread and butter for Antonia?"

"But where have you been?" said Sir Evas, looking at Toney, whose beautiful fresh color was a sight which did one good. Her very simple Norfolk jacket and short petticoat seemed to be the costume exactly fitted for her, though hardly the attire a fashionable girl would have deigned to wear.

"I went to see my new tutor," said Toney laughing. "Aunt Dove, it's rather a good plan of yours to send me off to him every morning. I should be sure to get into mischief here. I always want something to do."

"Humph," said Sir Evas. He was wondering whether it was a very good plan, for, as it was, t^l

position between Lady Dove and Mr. Hales was decidedly strained, to say the least of it.

"Miss Crump, dear, did you expect me to remain in bed all that time?" asked Toney, turning round to the silent companion, who was seldom addressed at meals and indeed preferred to be unnoticed.

"After a journey I thought, Miss Antonia, that——"

"Oh! don't! What a horrid name! I'm Toney. Uncle Dove's agreed to call me so."

"You have agreed, Evas, to that dreadful name?" said Lady Dove, looking up from her plate. "Antonia, I always like the strict truth. Your uncle has done nothing of the kind."

"Oh, but he did when——" Toney paused, remembering that she mustn't peach, and Sir Evas coughed uncomfortably. "Well, now I know my way about, Aunt Dove, I can take our messages; I do hope you'll make me useful."

"There are some people coming to tea this afternoon, Antonia; I shall expect you to come in and help me to entertain them. And now, if you please, do not let us hear so much of your voice."

Toney blushed a little, but resolutely pursed up her lips very tightly, making such a comical face that even poor Miss Crump smiled, and Sir Evas tried to look another way.

"Evas, Lord and Lady Carew are coming this afternoon. It is very important to secure his interest if you mean to stand for the County Council; so, pray, be in to tea. Lady Carew's good opinion goes a long way with her husband."

"I am not surprised," said Sir Evas absently.

"She thinks she is quite a leader of society. Such a vain, stuck-up person—Miss Crump, I want you to go out and tell Simpson to send in his best flowers this morning. You must arrange the vases so as to make them look their best. My flowers are never as well done as Lady Carew's. But first, where is Antonia's time-table? Come into my sitting-room, if you please, Antonia."

Antonia did not answer. Lady Dove looked up sharply.

"I expect girls to answer me, Antonia, when I speak to them."

"I am glad, Aunt Dove. I really *did* want to, but you said just now my voice was not to be heard, and it is like bottling up a volcano. It quite suffocates me. Do you know that feeling, chum, dear?"

Miss Crump fled to save herself further questions, for Lady Dove's face boded no good to her this morning.

"Can you ride, Toney?" half-whispered Sir Evas, as he followed the ladies, "because there is an old pony that you might have if— I want to ride over to one of my farms before tea."

"Ride!" said Toney.

"You must learn," put in Lady Dove. "Sir Evas wants a companion when he potters about, and any one can stick on Selim."

"An old pony, Aunt Dove?" said Toney laughing. "Shall I be able to keep on at all, do you think?"

"I really don't know how far your ignorance

goes," was the severe answer. "Now, come here, Antonia—Miss Crump!"

Lady Dove's sitting-room was Miss Crump's chamber of the inquisition. Many and many a sad hour had she passed in it, but at this moment she felt even more nervous than usual. The words of her new mission rang in her ears. *She* must see that Miss Antonia kept her time-table, but how could she? The idea was like a terrible nightmare weighing her down.

"Miss Crump, if you please, will you read the time-table?"

Toney sat down very demurely on the edge of a chair; but her quick eyes wandered about the room, taking in all that was there. Miss Crump's voice sounded very melancholy as she read out:

"To rise at seven. To be down at eight o'clock. To practise for an hour on the pianoforte——"

Toney jumped up.

"Aunt Dove, that seems too long; I mean for your sake, I don't mind much. I don't know my notes; I can only stump about with one finger, but I'll do that if you like; only Pups, who was musical, said he preferred a lunatic asylum to my practising."

Lady Dove gasped.

"You don't know your notes, Antonia!"

"No. You see, I've no ear, and it is really a great mistake to teach music to girls who can't, however much they try, distinguish one note from another. Now isn't it?"

"Take out that hour, Miss Crump, if you please.

But don't you draw, Antonia, or paint? Have you no accomplishments?"

Toney shook her head sadly and looked at the ceiling, as if she were trying to remember some accomplishment which she possessed, but which she had for the moment forgotten.

"All I know, Aunt Dove, is useful and solid. I can run very well. I could beat most of the boys at running at home, and I shouldn't like to get out of practice; but I had better not mention the other thing I can do because, well—— Suppose I took that hour for running in the park?"

"Antonia! The servants would think we had a mad person in the house if they do not think so already."

"I'm sorry, but running is really useful. The doctors say it expands the chest, and suppose Uncle Dove fell ill and you wanted to send for a doctor in a hurry——"

"Thank you, but we have servants and horses here. In my youth girls used backboards, and really, Antonia, I believe that you—wear no stays! Your figure is— I must take you to Oldfield to buy you some young lady's clothes."

"I could not wear them I expect; thank you all the same, Aunt Dove, and you see as I'm not to be much seen it won't matter what my figure looks like. There should be no unnecessary pressure, as Pups used to say."

"You are to be seen when it is convenient. Go on, if you please, Miss Crump."

"To be present at family prayers and at breakfast

To go to Mr. Hales at ten-fifteen, accompanied by Miss Crump"—Miss Crump blushed at having to pronounce her own name, but Toney was, at this part, convulsed with merriment.

"I'm so sorry, Miss Crump, indeed I am. I was only thinking of you coming with me. I should be there before you had got many yards off this house. Never mind. Any more?"

"Young ladies do not go about unattended. Now if you please, Miss Crump, continue."

When the time-table was finished Toney seemed to have lost interest in it, and even tried to hide a yawn.

"You can amuse yourself this morning, Antonia, alone. I will lend you a skirt to ride in with Sir Evas this afternoon, and at tea I shall expect you to entertain any guests who may not be talking to me. Now I wish to give you your orders, Miss Crump. You can go, Antonia."

Toney started up once more full of life, and was downstairs and out-of-doors in a very short time. She had not yet seen all the park, and she had several ideas in her head. But having reached a place of solitude the young girl stopped at the foot of a noble trio of beech trees. She sat down with her elbows on her knees, and her keen, eager face leaning on her rosy palms.

"I want Pups," she muttered several times. "I want Pups, only I promised him not to fret. He said there was such lots to do in the world; but, oh, dear! it's a prisoner I am here. It's all so prim and stupid. However shall I live? If I had a heap of money I'd

hunt up all the poor relations and give them such an awfully good, jolly time of it—that I would. Crum-pet should have her share. Oh, dear! she's lived here fifteen years and she's not dead! She must be very, very tough; and poor Uncle Dove's lived longer still here and he's not dead, but they don't either of them look healthy. Pups said people must have scope and live for others to be healthy. Pups, dear, you said you'd know everything about me, and what you most hated in all the world was to see me off my feed and down in the mouth, so here goes. I'll cheer up and just go ahead. Gracious stars! What a nice colt! Suppose I just raced off the blues. There never was a colt yet I couldn't manage. Pups said so."

Toney jumped up and was all life again, and walking softly she made advances to a young thoroughbred, who was, like Toney herself, feeling that life is after all a very nice possession. There are a few beings born with a strange power over animals, which power, like other gifts, is not to be acquired and has never been satisfactorily explained. Toney could not learn her notes, but she could ride any horse, and, what is more, she could tame, for the time being, any animal who came within reach of her magnetic influence. She crept up to the young horse Indian fashion, then she managed to touch it, then to stroke it. She rubbed her short curly hair against his beautiful neck, and in a quarter of an hour the conquest was completed.

"Now, Beauty, you'll give me a good canter; it will be a bottle of tonic, and Aunt Dove will be for-

gotten. It will just make up for that silly tea party that I have to attend."

In a few minutes Toney was having a glorious gallop bareback round the outskirts of the park, but keeping, from motives of prudence, well out of sight of the house. Suddenly she came to a low fence, and the temptation was too great to resist.

"Now, Beauty, over, and don't jerk me off or I shall never forgive you."

In another moment Toney and the colt, without having parted company, landed on a smooth grass road leading apparently to another park. At that moment, from another side path, a young man on an old hunter stopped her progress.

"By Jove!" was his exclamation, and Toney, red with her exertion, looked up, somewhat displeased, to see before her a young, good-looking man, whose sunburnt countenance spoke plainly of foreign climes.

Toney's "Beauty" was too much excited to wish to pause in her novel occupation, so without another word Toney turned her head and repeated the jump over the fence. This done, with the agility of a wild animal, she swung herself down and Beauty continued his gallop alone.

"By Jove!" repeated the young man walking his horse up to the fence. "Do you know that you were trespassing by jumping over this fence?"

"No, how should I know it?" said Toney, sitting on the top of the post and immediately beginning to stroke the hunter's nose. "I'm just a stranger here, giving myself a little shake up in this very dull park."

"Dull park! A stranger?" ("A very extraordinary specimen," he muttered under his breath.)

"I imagine you are a stranger too, or you would have heard about Lady Dove's kindness."

"Well, I am and I'm not a stranger. This is my property, and my name is Lewis Waycott."

"Not half a bad name," said Toney, beginning to pant less audibly; "but it wasn't polite of you to stop me. I thought I had found a way out of this hole."

"Hole! Why, Sir Evas Dove's park is the largest in the country," and the young man laughed. "Mine is not half the size, but I'm really sorry I stopped such an amazon. You had no saddle I see!" and Lewis Waycott fairly laughed. Toney was, however, not going to be laughed at.

"I suppose a horse wasn't born with a saddle on as you English people seem to believe. Still I didn't know this was anybody's property. I'm sorry I went on." Her face was again all smiles, and Lewis Waycott thought he had never seen any one so original before. He longed to ask her name.

"Please don't mention it. If this property is not big enough for you, pray come into mine, only the Waycotts and the Doves are not bosom friends."

"Family feud?"

"Well, not exactly, but my father and Lady Dove had words and——"

Toney laughed aloud.

"I've had words with her too, but I only came yesterday, and Aunt Dove thinks I'm not much of a young lady."

"Not an ordinary young lady perhaps," suggested Mr. Waycott, hiding a smile.

"Have you got any poor relations, Mr. Waycott?" Toney's abrupt changes of conversation were often rather puzzling.

Lewis Waycott tried to think if he had or had not.

"Well, I don't know, I'm sure. Most people have. My Aunt Delia, who is going to live with me, is not rich."

"That doesn't seem quite the same case. Well, you see, Mr. Waycott, I'm a poor relation, and I've been trying hard to think what I could do to earn a living. But in this dull place they don't want anything that I *can* do."

Toney spoke quite earnestly.

"I should fancy Sir Evas has enough money for many relations," he said.

"Pups said that, and somehow we ought to have had some too. I forgot why we didn't, but Pups thought I had better come here till I was older. However, Aunt Dove thinks my education is not quite up to the mark."

"It is beyond it as to riding."

"Yes, and if Aunt Dove wanted to learn to ride I could earn my board and keep, couldn't I, by teaching her?"

"I think you could! Forgive my laughing. I was thinking Lady Dove would not trust herself on that colt's back for any amount of money."

Toney laughed too.

"Some people are afraid, aren't they? It's very

odd! I knew a friend of Pups who was. A doctor, Pups was a doctor, such an awfully good one. A hero doctor, you know."

"I'm sure of it."

"Well, you are nice. I must go now. This afternoon I've got to saunter round about with Uncle Dove and an old pony—Ouaf!"

Lewis Waycott laughed again.

"Your powers will be wasted, I fear."

"Yes, but Uncle Dove is rather jolly, only—
What an old dear this horse is. What do you call it?"

"Sultan."

"That isn't very original. Our best was called Ketchup. He'd catch up any horse—except a trained hunter, of course. Oh, if he were here! Well, good-by. I'll try and not trespass again. I can't think how I shall ever keep myself fenced in as you all are here. Aunt Dove's made a time-table for me—"

"Oh, dear! has she? She is a brave lady."

"She should not, should she? However shall I remember it? But Mr. Hales is to finish my education."

"Poor Hales! I beg your pardon, but I think you had better not finish. It might only spoil the beginning."

"Pups was a little sorry about the piano, but he saw it wouldn't do. I fell asleep so often over it, and he thought any further trial would bring on catalepsy." Before Lewis Waycott could answer Toney had jumped off the post and was running across the

park with the swift easy motion of a trained runner, which very few girls ever acquire. After looking after her for a little while Lewis laughed again.

“Well! Lady Dove must have found her match! A poor relation indeed! What a good joke!”

CHAPTER VI.

TEA AT HOME.

LADY DOVE was always "at home" to her friends on Fridays at tea time. Some of the boldest called it a "Friday penance," for she was, except on special occasions, by no means a very pleasant hostess, having the ability to say very disagreeable things, but, at the same time, also easily taking offence if the neighborhood neglected her. Sir Evas, on the contrary, was a general favorite, and for his sake and also for many social and political reasons, a good many guests drove over on Friday afternoon to drink tea with Lady Dove at Aldersfield House. If there was one thing more than another which poor Miss Crump disliked, it was this same Friday reception. The poor companion was in this assembly neither fish, flesh, nor fowl, to use an expressive simile. Few people said more than "thank you" to her if she handed them some tea, and as she was never introduced, some of them barely knew her name, and half thought she was a ladylike-looking housekeeper. Others, who knew, said:

"That poor, dull-looking companion!" and that was the end of their meditations about her.

It so happened that this special Friday was the 1:

of April, and as lovely a spring day as it is possible to conceive. The birds were joyous, the trees were tinged with green and red, and the spring flowers a delight to those who had eyes to see them. The visiting circle made up its mind that though Lady Dove's tea-table was not the most amusing circle they could find, still the drive was a lovely one. The park was really a treat to drive through, and many of the best county families might meet there. Little did they guess that there would be to-day a novel element in the dull house.

Lady Dove did not expect the Vicarage party to come unasked. Now and then they received a formal invitation, and though Mr. Hales was far too good and great a man to notice little insults, his sister did not take it so quietly. The little note had come to-day, and the young Vicar asked if his mother and his sister would accompany him.

"Ah, poor Sir Evas!" said Mrs. Hales, smiling the smile which made her son happy; "let me come with you. Very often it is not as bad as one imagines."

"There is no one quite good enough or worthy enough to receive you, mother."

"What nonsense you talk, Cecil. We shall have a lovely walk; besides, I am rather curious to see our mad Australian again, and it makes Silvia miserably shy to sit under Lady Dove's satire."

At Waycott Hall there was another person anxious to see more of the newcomer.

"Aunt Delia!" exclaimed Lewis, addressing a widow lady when he came in to lunch, "are you going to call at Aldersfield House to-day?"

The cousins, about whom Lady Dove had spoken, were two pretty ladylike girls, both very musical and addicted to much violin playing. Aunt Honoria, the maiden aunt, who directed the household and who was Lewis' right hand, heard the question.

"Pray, Delia, don't spoil your visit here by going to Lady Dove's at home," said Miss Honoria Waycott. "She is a very disagreeable woman and none of her people like her. As for my part, I give her my mind whenever I see her, but it upsets me for the day."

Lewis laughed. He was a young man who enjoyed the society of women whether they were old or young. He was chivalrous by nature, and even the spoiling life which had been his had not spoilt him. He had been left an orphan when a boy of fifteen through the result of a railway accident in which both parents had been killed. His Aunt Honoria had tried to bring him up as well as she could. She was a clever, original woman and her nephew was devoted to her, but he usually managed to get his own way with her. His Aunt Delia was gentle in manner, but she too had a firm will of her own, and it was the signs of this will which Lady Dove disliked. She had hated Lewis' father, a man of determined will and of opposite politics, and she was quite willing to pass on her dislike to the son.

It was only now that the Waycotts had at last been able to make up their minds to return to the family place. Lewis had never really forgotten that accident and its results. Bright and cheerful though he was outwardly, he was the subject to sudden fit

of depression when he recalled the terrible scene. He had by mere chance come late for the train, and had jumped into another carriage, meaning to join his parents at the first stopping place. As it was, he never saw them alive again. His aunt had done all she could to replace his parents; but the lad of fifteen had adored his bright, pretty mother, whose idol he was, and no one had ever really taken her place in his heart.

Now, it was from a strong sense of duty, and also owing partly to a letter written to him by Mr. Hales, that he had made up his mind to return. The village was owned by the Waycotts and Doves, and the two squires had never been able to live at unity together. Mr. Hales represented to the young man that his agent was neglecting his interests, that the poor were suffering, and that it was his duty to look into his own affairs.

"What business is it of Mr. Hales?" Aunt Honoria said sharply. "You do all you can, Lewis, and it would be very painful to live in the old place again."

"Hales says I ought."

"I don't wonder Lady Dove can't get on with such a man."

"Aunt Honor, I think he's right. Let's go home," said Lewis, "and Aunt Delia, who has just lost her home and her money, can come and pay us a long visit!"

"Jeanie and Maud would like it, but you might think them tiresome. They fiddle half their life away," said Miss Honor.

"We are very good friends. I should like them; besides, Aunt Honor, I do dread the—empty rooms."

Lewis had been to Oxford and he had roamed through the continent, but still he dreaded to return to the place where his mother had lived. Only his aunt realized this deep, undying feeling about his dead mother. His father, much as he had loved him, had not left the same impression upon his mind.

Now, Mrs. Hamilton, Jeanie and Maud, Aunt Honor, and Lewis had all settled themselves at Waycott Hall, and the effort having been made, Lewis now began to realize that property has rights over its owner, and that to shirk responsibility is as bad as using it badly.

But it was Toney's appearance and Toney's talk which had first drawn him out of himself. The idea that the family foe had saddled herself with such a relation was an idea too comical to be kept to himself.

"We don't want to see Lady Dove," said Jeanie, and Maud echoed the sentiment.

"Well, I'll go with you," said Miss Waycott. "I shall have to go some time."

"Maud, you will enjoy it," said Lewis to the youngest cousin, who was dainty and pretty.

"Oh, no! cousin Lewis. Tea parties are very stupid at Aldersfield."

"Aunt Delia, can't I persuade you?"

"I'll call with the girls on a fine afternoon," said Mrs. Hamilton smiling.

"You'll make her your enemy for life, Delia," said Miss Waycott, and Jeanie added:

"I think that won't hurt us very much. Last

time I went Lady Dove asked me if I intended earning my own living, now we had lost our money in Carell's Bank."

"And what did you say," asked Lewis.

"I said that Maud and I were preparing for the musical profession, and she said, 'A very bad one indeed, Miss Hamilton.'"

"Horrid old thing!" said Maud coloring, for she could not bear to be reminded that they were now poor.

"I wonder that you are so anxious to go," said Miss Waycott, turning to Lewis.

"It is the place of the youngest family foe to make advances. By the way, Field tells me we are still disputing with the Doves about that mill stream. It's Lady Dove's doing, but she says Sir Evas must go to law."

"How foolish!"

"Extremely, but that is what we must expect. I will order the pony carriage at four o'clock, and we will go round the park road and into the village before going in to Aldersfield."

Lewis went off for a ride, and his cousins returned to practise their violins in a large room now called the school-room, for the girls were not to come out till the following June, when Jeanie would be nearly eighteen.

Lady Dove spent the afternoon in going to pay one of her periodical visits to the village school. She thought it her duty to inspect the girls' needlework, and to hear a few of them repeat something. Miss Mellish, the schoolmistress, dreaded these visits, be-

cause her ladyship managed to make all the children cross, herself included.

When Toney came in from her ride on the rocking horse, as she expressed it, she found Miss Crump with a pale face on which was a slight frown, looking despairingly at the flower vases in the drawing-room. She had not had one moment all day to enjoy the sweet spring air, and now the result of her afternoon's work looked dreadfully ugly.

"What's the matter, dear Crumpet? Do you know that is a jolly name for you? Soft and—well, you know. You don't mind, do you? It's a pet name."

"Oh, Miss Antonia! the flowers are not, I am sure, well done, and Lady Dove will— It's something in my fingers, though I took as much pains as I could, and Lady Carew has a very keen eye for beauty, Lady Dove says."

Toney ran up to a tall jar into which Miss Crump had with great perseverance inserted a pound of flowers by weight.

"It is like a cabbage top, isn't it? Wait, Crumpet, dear, I'll make this right. Pups said flowers knew me."

With agile fingers she drew out those flowers which did not tone with the others; picked out here, put in there, rushed to pick a trailing creeper, and in ten minutes the vase looked beautiful.

"Oh!" said Miss Crump, "and it took me such a time! And if you would give a touch to this stand, Miss."

"I won't unless you call me Toney."

"Then, Miss Toney——"

"No—Toney, Crumpet, dear. You know I'm a poor relation. I don't want to sail under false colors."

In her heart Miss Crump was amazed. In spite of her humility she so much resented being a poor companion that she could not understand Toney's frame of mind.

The girl's agile fingers were again soon at work, and only when the distant figure of Lady Dove was seen did Miss Crump speak again.

"Oh, now you must go. You are not dressed. Your riding skirt I see is still on. Give me these flowers. I'll throw them away!"

"Throw them away! Oh, Crumpet! How dreadful! What will they think? You must burn them. A funeral pyre, you know, is a very honorable way of dying, or else you must bury them underground as we do."

"Bury dead flowers!" said poor Miss Crump, too much astonished to notice Lady Dove's nearer approach till carriage wheels were audible. Then she exclaimed, "Oh, do, do go, what will——"

Toney laughed, but in pity for Crumpet hurried off to attire herself in her simple morning dress. She had a "Sunday" frock, but that she thought was quite unnecessary for any amount of ladies and gentlemen, and only strictly necessary for going to church.

Miss Crump, in the meanwhile, made herself as small as possible and shrank behind a large ottoman, as Lady Dove and several ladies and gentlemen entered. It must not be thought that Lady Dove was always disagreeable. On the contrary, she could, at

pleasure, put on exquisite manners, and Lord and Lady Carew, who now entered, were people to be treated with great respect, at least to their faces. She was now all smiles and affability, doing the honors of the bright spring day and the sunshine as if she had created them on purpose to give Lady Carew pleasure.

"I really am glad to give you a fine day, Lady Carew. This peep is quite beautiful, isn't it?"

"That sheet of water is certainly the glory of the neighborhood," said Lord Carew.

"So delightful for skating in winter," said his wife.

"That careless husband of mine promised to be in," said Lady Dove. "I wonder where he is. No, that is not Evas. It must be the young Vicar, Mr. Hales. We gave him the living last year. He was in reduced circumstances."

"Ah!" said Lady Carew, "the clergy are very poor now, what with glebes and dilapidations, Arthur says."

"And they are so extravagant! Their wives and daughters will dress in the latest fashion! Ah! there is Sir Evas!"

Sir Evas came in, and with him Mr. Hales and his mother. Lady Dove's greeting to them was cold and distant, and not calculated to set them at their ease, though she hastened presently to say:

"I must thank you for agreeing to my request about this unfortunate young relation. Of course we mean to do the best we can for her, though she has no real claim at all on Sir Evas—none."

Mr. Hales bowed slightly, and then Sir Evas took him off to introduce him to Lord Carew. When tea was served, Miss Crump's duties began. She was expected to see that no one was in need of anything, and her shyness made this task very painful to her. Other callers dropped in, and lastly Lewis Waycott and his aunt were announced. Lady Dove managed to get near Miss Crump and to whisper to her:

"Where is Antonia, Miss Crump? Why did you not see that she was ready? I—I told you especially to——"

At this moment, however, there was the sound of Trick's joyous barking heard without, and a girlish, musical voice remonstrating audibly:

"Trick, go back, indeed you must; you have not been invited."

A loud bark as if in contradiction to this remark.

Then the door was burst open, and Antonia and Trick seemed to come in pell-mell together, the laughter and the bark in strange unison.

It was indeed a most unfortunate moment for Lady Dove. Her face became crimson, and a young lady standing near the door giggled outright. Toney was dressed in her Norfolk jacket and short skirt, as simple an attire as could possibly be imagined; but the bright color on her cheeks, the curling picturesque hair, and above all the expression of irresistible fun and good-nature, added to the real beauty of the bright eyes, made a most attractive picture, delighting the eyes of the fashionable company.

Sir Evas came to the rescue.

"Toney, I beseech you, take the dog away."

“But he won't ever go back, Uncle Dove. His motto is onward. It's Trick's peculiarity. Do run and open the window for him and then he'll go, if he doesn't see a tempting pair of heels on the way. O Trick! you have disgraced me! You know this was not in our time-table.”

There was no disguising Toney's words, especially as her entrance had caused a sudden hush in the conversation, and poor Sir Evas, having already made some acquaintance with Trick's character, walked hastily across the room to prepare the “way out” for that original animal.

All these hasty precautions made the ladies shrink aside, for they quickly imbibed the idea from Lady Dove's exclamaiton of “Oh! that dreadful, dangerous dog! Oh! that terrible girl!” that both of these creatures were mad. At this instant Lewis Waycott, delighted at the incident, ran forward to the window so as to save Sir Evas the trouble of opening it.

Unfortunately, Lord Carew, seeing nothing but a very ordinary-looking little terrier, did not move out of Trick's way, and in a moment this strange creature had taken a fancy to his heels. With a sudden bounce he had crouched behind his lordship and was worrying his highly polished shoes.

Lord Carew was a man who stood upon his dignity. Every one knew this, especially Lady Dove, and she rushed forward to save this important guest from the ridiculous position he was now placed in.

“Antonia, I am surprised, ashamed! What do you mean?”

Before poor Toney (who, however, seemed quite

unconscious of the enormity of her crime) could come to the rescue, Lewis Waycott pounced upon Trick and carried him struggling and barking to the open air, and there tumbled him out with no great ceremony as he shut the window.

Toney was close beside him in a moment.

"Oh! you really should have been more polite to him. He will never forgive you for giving him such an undignified tumble, never. I never met a dog who had feelings about his personal dignity so strongly developed."

"I'm very sorry," said Lewis, laughing, "but it was neck or nothing."

Toney, looking up at Lady Dove's face, began to realize the enormity of her sin and immediately came forward to apologize.

"I'm very sorry, Aunt Dove, I really am; but uncle said Trick was not to go out with us, and when I came home his spirits overflowed. Can't you feel for him?"

The idea of Lady Dove having a fellow-feeling for an overflow of animal spirits was more than Lady Carew and several others present could bear without a smile. Lady Dove blushed more deeply, and was far more annoyed by this apology than by the crime.

"Antonia, shake hands with Lady Carew and beg her pardon."

Toney came up without a shade of shyness and held out her hand very graciously.

"How do you do, Miss Dove?" said Lady Carew, hazarding this name in order to be told how this original inmate of Aldersfield was to be called.

"We haven't been introduced properly," said Toney, "but that doesn't matter, you know. I'm Toney, Toney Whitburn. I've come to live here till I can find something to do."

"Antonia! We hope to make an English young lady of this Australian child," now said Lady Dove in a gracious tone, turning to Lady Carew, for she dreaded any more of Antonia's revelations.

"It's too late," said Toney, seriously. "I feel now as if I had been a year in prison, and I only came yesterday. You see, I was brought up differently."

"You'll soon become accustomed to our ways," said Lady Carew kindly.

Toney looked around her and sniffed a little.

"I don't think so. You see, it's the way here to go to these tea parties and to say all sorts of things you don't mean. I can't learn all that. Aunt Dove won't like my ways, you see, and I——"

It was at this moment that Miss Crump threw herself into the breach, making the greatest effort she had ever made in her life, by coming forward, unsolicited, into the circle immediately under Lady Dove's eye.

"Miss Antonia, here is some tea for you."

"Have you been out for a ride?" said Lewis, now coming up to her as she went to stand by Miss Crump's tea-table, and happily for her a new arrival caused the conversation to fall back into its usual channel, though Toney could hear Lady Dove, now and then murmuring, "We mean to do our best——"

Toney looked up at the young man and her face was all smiles again.

“Don’t tell of me, please; you see what disgrace I get into here. I never did in Australia. This afternoon I had a rocking-horse, and it nearly or quite set me to sleep. Uncle Dove is rather like a bumble-bee in a bottle when he is going round his farms. It’s very, very dull; but he’s a dear, old duck.”

“A gentleman never tells tales, you can trust me. But if you really like a good hunter, more docile than your Beauty, I could——”

Mrs. Hales came up to Toney and shook hands with her.

“You look like a nice, quiet pond in the middle of a raging sea,” said Toney, smiling, “and you haven’t said anything to Miss Crump. And you, Mr. Waycott, don’t you know Miss Crump?”

Mrs. Hales did know Miss Crump by sight, of course. She was often at church, but she had never been introduced to her, and had never had the courage to make the first advances. She now, however, held out her hand to the timid companion and said a few kind words. Her conscience suddenly reproached her for having waited for Toney’s introduction, but it was another thing with Lewis Waycott, the young, rich, and much envied squire of Waycott Hall. Toney introduced Miss Crump as if it were a great honor for him to have the pleasure of shaking hands with the pale, insignificant, little person, who looked and apparently was of no account at all in the fashionable circle. Lewis Waycott, however, had not seen Miss Crump before, or at all events had not noticed her, and he said something pleasant, for he could not be anything but a gentleman.

"It's very kind of you to sit there and see to our wants. I must own to liking endless cups of tea, especially after driving my aunt about."

"Which is your aunt?" said Toney, looking round.

"That tall lady; she is thin and wears spectacles."

Toney looked at her keenly. That quick glance of hers was very characteristic as well as searching. It made Lewis smile as Toney remarked:

"She isn't stiff inside her, but she wants to look it outside, doesn't she?"

"Oh, she has the kindest heart in the world—when she likes."

"Look, Miss Crump, what do you think of Mr. Waycott's aunt?"

"Oh, Miss Antonia! personal remarks——"

"There, Crumpet, you are like the rest of the people here. They say things behind the backs of their friends and enemies and won't say them straight out. I call it just mean."

"Wouldn't it be slightly inconvenient if we all spoke our minds?" said Lewis Waycott.

"Why?"

"Well, we should hear some unpleasant truths."

"Do you think it would be inconvenient, Mrs. Hales?"

"We should not always appreciate perfectly candid remarks," said that lady.

"I don't mind at all Aunt Dove's saying to people in a whisper that she's very kind to take me in because I'm a poor relation of Sir Evas. Well, it's the truth, and I don't mind who knows it, so I wish she would say it out aloud. I know when her head

goes rather near to the other person, and when he just gives a side glance to see where I am, that she is talking about me."

"Miss Antonia!" gasped Miss Crump.

"Well, then, you see, Crumpet, dear, I told you to call me Toney. Everybody does. I'm not grown up. You haven't had a drop of tea yourself. Mr. Waycott, do just see to that while I go and find out if poor Trick is happier."

"Thank you, but indeed my tea is of no consequence," said Miss Crump, quite upset by Lewis Waycott's polite attentions and fearing Lady Dove would notice them.

"Indeed I must obey Miss Whitburn; she will have no qualms as to telling me of my negligence, I'm sure," and he laughed aloud.

"She doesn't mean it, I'm sure," said Miss Crump, trying to apologize for Toney. "She is really so kind-hearted at the bottom, and this life is all new to her. She only came yesterday, and she must have had a very different life out in Australia. Lady Dove will soon—" But now Miss Crump stopped short as she saw Lewis Waycott beginning to laugh.

"I know what you meant to say, but indeed I hope not."

"Oh, yes, but she will; in time you know, one gives in. I did." Something in the sorrowful expression of the pale, insignificant teamaker touched Lewis' heart.

"You live here, I think?"

"Oh, yes; I'm—I'm—" Then remembering Toney, Miss Crump got it out. "I'm only Lady Dove's com-

panion. She was kind enough to bring me here years ago when I was young, and I'm here still."

Lewis knew all about the teamaker now, and his smile died away. Her few words and her hot blushes had told the story of her life more pathetically than the most eloquent speech could have done.

He tried to make the best of it by saying cheerfully :

"Well, it's a nice place to live in. The park is so pretty, and I suppose you drive out sometimes." He felt a little uncertain as to the duties of a companion, but Toney had told him to entertain her and he was doing his best to obey her.

"Yes, when Lady Dove hasn't any one else, or the horse wants exercise."

"Oh! You must come and see us sometimes. In spite of Miss Toney's remark, my aunt is——"

Toney was again suddenly in their midst.

"Trick's all right, only he is still very much hurt with you, Mr. Waycott. Mr. Waycott, your aunt is winking at you. I expect she means something, doesn't she?"

Poor Lewis thought he should burst out laughing in good earnest, but with great difficulty he refrained from disgracing himself.

"Your eyes see everything, Miss Whitburn. Yes, that is my aunt's way of saying I must talk to some one else," and he moved off and Mr. Hales took his place.

"Here is Mr. Hales. Are you coming to speak seriously to your pupil?"

Mr. Hales' face of quiet power made Toney a little grave as she continued, "I'm really coming to-mor

row. I hope you won't mind very much. I'm sure your sister will. Miss Crump, do you know her? Mr. Hales, Miss Crump. That's an introduction, isn't it? Well, do tell her that you think I can walk alone."

"Remembering my first sight of you, I think you can, Miss Whitburn."

"Oh, but Lady Dove—" began Miss Crump as she found her hand taken by the Vicar.

"Antonia!" said Lady Dove, and Toney had to go forward.

"Lady Carew wants some more tea. Take her cup, if you please."

"If you come to the table you'll get it hotter," said Toney, and to Lady Dove's horror Lady Carew actually followed Toney with a smile on her lips; but worse was to follow.

"Do you like this cream-cake? I do— Lady Carew, Miss Crump. I thought I had better introduce you at once because it's so awkward—isn't it?—to stare at teamakers and not to speak to them. Out home we didn't wait for that nonsense but you do here, I see."

"A delicious cup of tea, Miss Crump," said Lady Carew, looking at her new acquaintance with a smile, for she had seen in a mirror close by Lady Dove's look of horror when Toney introduced her to the companion, and she enjoyed the fun. She had once been a lively girl herself, though the worries of her position had much calmed down her natural fun; indeed, her husband did not encourage anything in her but the greatest common-sense. She paid dearly for her position.

"Oh! please, don't," began Miss Crump; but before any more could be said Lord Carew came to fetch his wife away, and after their departure the room soon began to empty.

"When will you visit us?" said Lewis, coming back to Toney. "Aunt Honor, here is Miss Whitburn."

"I said I was sure you weren't as stiff as you looked," said Toney, eagerly. "Now are you? As to coming to see you, I can't."

"Why can't you?" said Miss Waycott gently.

"Because," and here Toney covered up her mouth to stifle a laugh, "because, you see, it isn't in my time-table!"

CHAPTER VII.

TAKEN TO TASK.

AFTER tea Lady Dove went to her sitting-room and made her husband follow her.

"Evas, did you ever see such conduct in one so young? She ought to be shut up!"

Sir Evas' kind face clouded over, and he looked much puzzled and very sorrowful.

"But, Melina, dear, the child was as quiet as possible during our ride; indeed, once when I was outside Coot's farm and he asked me to come in about some repairs, she actually fell asleep on the pony."

"Fell asleep! Well, when she is asleep is the only time she is quiet and like an ordinary mortal. I am going to speak seriously to her, and you must sit by and support me."

"How shall I do that?" asked Sir Evas, much puzzled; "and what has she done?"

"Oh, you men are quite blind. Lewis Waycott, I could see, was making fun of her."

"Was he? He is usually so good-natured."

"Evas, you know nothing about him, considering he has not been back a month. He seemed to me to be very much like his father. But the point is about Antonia."

"Call her up and have it over."

"And that silly Crump has no authority over her."

"You did not expect she would have, did you?"

"Evas, you are as bad." Lady Dove rang the bell, which always summoned poor Miss Crump, usually when she was taking much needed rest, and the summons always made the companion feel nervous and miserable.

She and Toney were in their mutual sitting-room, and Toney was making a beautiful nosegay of choicest flowers for their table. The flowers she had herself run out to pick.

"Oh, Miss Antonia!"

"No, say Toney at once, Crumpet."

"Well—Toney, you have picked these lovely greenhouse flowers for me. Suppose Lady Dove comes in and sees them!"

"Won't she admire them? Now, do you know, I think Aunt Dove has a taste for flowers. I heard her admiring them downstairs. She said to Lady Carew, 'I never allow servants to touch my drawing-room flowers. I think ladies are the only people who can arrange them to one's taste,' and the other pussycat answered, 'These are beautifully arranged, Lady Dove; you really have a talent for handling flowers,' and Aunt Dove smiled. She might have said you did them, only, you see, it wasn't you exactly."

"Oh, no, I'm sure I couldn't; but these you must have picked from the greenhouse. And what will Stopher say?"

"You see, Crumpet dear, this room isn't very

pretty, now, is it? But you can make any room lovely with flowers and just a little contrivance. Pups liked pretty things, and even if we were in a cabin I'd just rig it up scrumptious. This tablecloth is hideous. Could I find another somewhere else?"

At this moment Miss Crump started as if she had been shot. It was Lady Dove's bell that rang violently in her room.

"I didn't expect it," she said, excusing herself.

Toney sank back in the chair, laughing heartily.

"Crumpet, it's not for you, it's for me. Perhaps both of us. I'll come too. Don't you look so pink and white! Be brave. Pups did hate women who were cowards, but he said I hadn't enough nerves. He never saw me afraid. Can you remember your father, Crumpet?"

Toney hooked her arm into Miss Crump's limp-jointed elbow, and they walked slowly down the stairs and along the passage as if they were assisting at a funeral. This was Toney's doing, for usually Miss Crump ran when she heard the bell.

"Yes, of course; I was eighteen. But you know that my father was a shopkeeper."

"Had a store, had he? Lord Courthome's son had a store near us, and he was a stupid! I used to run in and help him when the goods came in. Do you know, Crumpet, I'm really fit to keep a store, at least if I might have you to assist me? You'd stay in and I'd run about and buy samples."

"Oh, you! You are a born lady, Toney, whatever any one says."

"Nonsense! At home we were all ladies. Oh, dear, such funny ones too!" and Toney suddenly sank on a chair in the passage to laugh at a recollection of the past.

Lady Dove's bell was heard pealing again, and Miss Crump, horrified, hurried on, followed by Toney, who won the race and dashed in first.

"Aunt Dove, Trick's asleep! Don't be afraid, it's only me and Crum—Miss Crump!"

"If you please, Miss Crump, another time I should be glad if you came *when* the bell rang."

"Indeed, Lady Dove, I—I——"

"Antonia," (Lady Dove never waited to hear the end of Miss Crump's sentences) "I wish to speak to you very seriously in the presence of Sir Evas, who entirely agrees with me."

Toney sat meekly down on a chair and demurely looked at Sir Evas.

"Oh, Aunt Dove! doesn't he always agree with you?"

"I wish to say that you are quite unfit for society, and that till your manners are improved I cannot allow you to come into the drawing-room when visitors of importance are there."

"Ouaf!" sighed Toney. "Well, that is really a relief, only you'll just point out those that are important, Aunt Dove, as people dress just alike in these days, and I don't know them."

Sir Evas put his hand over his mouth.

"You were very forward to-day, talking to Lady Carew as if she were a mere nobody."

"Oh, I am sorry! I really meant to be civil, be-

cause she didn't look half bad; but what did I do, Aunt Dove? Miss Crump, what——”

• “Indeed, Miss Antonia didn't mean to— It was my fault, I fear.”

“Yes, Miss Crump, on your side I consider you stepped out of your position.”

“It was my fault, Aunt Dove. I introduced Miss Crump to people because, you see, it's stupid to say nothing. Just a little conversation sharpens people, and I didn't know you hired Miss Crump to be a mute.”

Miss Crump became red as a peony, and Sir Evas burst out laughing.

“Evas!” said his wife, “you promised to uphold me.”

“There, I knew Uncle Dove didn't agree with you. He was saying out-of-doors he did wish Miss Crump talked more, she was so like a mouse, and I said, I'd teach her—uncle, now didn't I? I really thought I was giving Uncle Dove pleasure. She may talk to me, mayn't she?”

“Antonia, you are *too* foolish. You may talk to Miss Crump, certainly; but you—in fact, if you can't understand I shall impose silence on you.”

“A good long reverie is delightful; but you'll tell the people, won't you? or they'll think me rude. I don't mind at all, I've just lots to think of. Is that all you wanted us for, Aunt Dove, as we are very busy just now? You see there's the time-table to-morrow.” Toney was so grave and earnest that it was difficult to scold her.

"You will soon get into your aunt's ways," said Sir Evas, trying to smooth matters over.

"I hope she will. People will be much surprised——"

"Oh, no, Aunt Dove! I told everybody I was only a poor relation and that nothing I did mattered at all. They quite understood you were doing it for a kindness."

Lady Dove did not like her sentiments put in this fashion at all. They did not sound at all as she meant them to sound.

"You can go, Antonia. Miss Crump, if you please, I should like you to read to me till dinner time. Ah! by the bye, Antonia, you had better have your supper with Miss Crump this evening till I get an evening frock for you." Toney skipped away.

"Antonia!" She skipped back again.

"Yes, Aunt Dove."

"Take your time-table and pin it up, so as to remind you."

"Oh! that is a good idea; thank you, my memory is very poor. Uncle Dove, are you going to stay here or will you come round the stables with me?"

Sir Evas rose and slunk away, before his wife, who had been looking for a suitable book, could stop him.

Toney caught hold of him as he came out.

"Come along. Now, uncle, we'll have a good time. You may smoke, you know I don't mind, and we'll potter. Oh, you did look good just now, only just underneath your beard you were laughing like anything. Poor Crumpet! she's very sleepy. I'm sorry she's got to read now. 'Tain't her line I guess, but

I'll give her a good time to-night when you're at dinner."

"Toney, where were you raised?" said Sir Evas, laughing as he sighed.

"You're so bad at geography, uncle, that it's no use telling you. I shouldn't wonder if, when you were a boy, you played truant a good deal."

"Yes, whenever I could."

"And you do now when you can, I fancy. Wait a minute here. I'll fetch Trick."

"And my heels!"

"Oh, you've paid your footing, as they used to say. It's only at first, just to try your mettle, that Trick gnaws at you. Don't give me the slip, as I want to ask no end of questions."

In a short time Toney reappeared with Trick, a stout stick, very short petticoats, and a sailor hat.

Sir Evas looked her up and down.

"Is that your usual attire, Toney?"

"This is my business rig-out. You see, uncle, I'm already dead tired of this old park of yours. Come into the village and show me which are your cottages and where your Kanakas live. Pups knew all the settlement, and so did I, and I like to hear their stories, and to know the names of the babies, and all that sort of thing."

"My dear Toney, your thirst for information and your energy are appalling."

"Pups said, 'Don't rust out;' now, uncle, if you don't mind my saying it—I don't want to hurt your feelings mind, because I've a real regard for you."

"Thank you, Toney."

"You aren't brave enough, uncle. Just now, for instance, you didn't agree with Aunt Dove at all, but you just sat by consenting as it were. Real mean— However, apart from that, I've a true regard for you, and I want you to let me be a help to you."

"Oh, Toney! I doubt your great capability, that's the worst of your offer."

"Yes, I expect you do; Pups didn't. But, anyhow, I want something more lively than the park. How many cottages have you?"

"Oh, half the village, or more than half, is mine."

"And the other half?"

"Lewis Waycott owns the other half. The man you introduced Miss Crump to," and Sir Evas laughed again.

"It was a good joke!"

"Well, it's not a joke which I can see! Still, he's not so bad."

"So bad! He thinks a great deal of himself and his aunt dotes on him."

"Relations are partial. I expect in time Aunt Dove will get partial to me. She isn't so yet, is she?"

"Oh, she'll be all right," said Sir Evas, swallowing an untruth with pretty good grace.

"Now let's cut across here. We can get into the village much quicker this way."

"How did you find it out?"

"Oh, I've been round the park already."

"No, not right round. You haven't had time, Toney."

"But I did. I hurried a bit," and remembering

her gallop, Toney laughed but kept her counsel, while Sir Evas thought she was drawing a long bow.

"It's rather dewy now. Have you got boots?" he said.

"Boots! Oh, no! I don't wear boots, uncle, or stays, or——"

"Ahem," said Uncle Dove, looking another way.

"You see, one must just grow up as God made one, mustn't one?"

"It's preferable, certainly, but I thought ladies——"

"You're very behindhand, uncle. Now tell me about the poor people. How many families have you?"

Sir Evas was, speaking in a general way, a good landlord; but as to knowing anything in particular, he never had gone into small details—indeed, his wife did all the scolding and the evictions which she thought were necessary.

"I'm not certain, and then you know Woods does all the details. He's a good agent. He deals with the farmers, for otherwise life wouldn't be worth living. Repairs and all kinds of things you know nothing of, Toney."

"But I do, and drains too! Pups was awfully particular about drains. He said, when he knew it, that the drainage of this village was a disgrace to civilization."

"Bunkum! He knew nothing about it." Toney changed the conversation.

"Uncle, how soon shall you consider my education with Mr. Hales finished?"

"I suppose it depends how much is begun."

Toney laughed uproariously, and Trick, thinking there was some good joke going on, barked in concert.

“Well, you see, I’m ignorant, there’s no doubt about it, and you can’t make up for lost time. ‘It’s a law of nature,’ Pups used to say. I’m sure there’s a nest in this little plantation; I must look,” and she dashed in, leaving Sir Evas to turn over many things in his mind. He, like Miss Crump, felt suddenly rubbed brighter by the presence of this extraordinary young person. Ah! if he only had had a child of his own—a boy to succeed him, or even a girl to care about him. When Toney returned Sir Evas was slightly melancholy. Toney, having strangely quick sympathies, discovered this, though she could not guess the cause.

“Are you down in the mouth, uncle?”

“Eh, no! of course not. Now, Miss Harum Scarum, here is a still shorter cut to the village. Do you see out yonder? Those woods are the happy hunting-ground of poachers. My men have no end of trouble with them.”

Toney’s eyes brightened.

“How I should love to join them!”

“Join them?”

“Well, yes. It must be no end of excitement, and I could teach Trick to go and fetch anything. Don’t speak loud about it—it’s in his blood—his uncle was an awfully clever poacher. But are they your men, uncle?”

“No, Waycott’s folk. They take advantage of having known of our family feud.”

"And do your men poach on Mr. Waycott's land? If so, you're quits."

"Rascals! No, a county gentleman and a magistrate must never wink at law-breaking."

"I expect you're not fair to them somehow."

"Not fair! Hulloo, look at that man! There's a hang-dog look about him as he slinks along which makes me think he's up to some mischief."

"He's got a nice-shaped face," said Toney triumphantly.

"Nice-shaped face! Really, Toney? Well, here's the village. Which way are we to turn up, please?"

"To our cottages, of course. Oh, uncle! there's my little girl."

The child had also seen Toney and ran toward her, holding out her arms, intimating that she would like another ride on the young lady's back.

The cottage door stood open, and the father, just back from work, was smoking a pipe. He touched his cap to his landlord and the young lady, but to his surprise the latter stooped down and in another minute his child was pick-a-back on Toney's shoulders.

"Oh, Mr. Thomas! here's Sir Evas come to see you. He wants to pay a call on you. Your little girl came too soon to school this morning and I gave her a ride."

Mr. Thomas' cottage depended on his daughter Mary, aged twelve, who was now preparing his supper. The place looked untidy and the children uncared for. Since his wife's death Mr. Thomas had taken to drink and took little interest about his children. At this moment he sincerely wished that his

Minnie had not been too early for school, and that the young lady would not be so very kind as to bring his landlord to his cottage. Mr. Thomas had a conscience, which was at this moment uneasy about many things.

Mary Thomas stood quite still, with her mouth open and her cheeks turning bright red. Sir Evas had never crossed the cottage threshold before. Indeed, he only followed Toney now because he had not the presence of mind to leave her.

Toney, however, appeared quite unconscious of any awkwardness in the situation.

"Well," she said, depositing Minnie on a chair. "Have you got a chair for us?"

Mary rushed to a wooden seat and rubbed it with her hand and her apron, hardly knowing what she did or which was which.

Mr. Thomas stood still too, holding his pipe in his hand and looking another way.

"Well, Mr. Thomas, if you can't see to your little girl getting to school in right time, I'll tell you what I'll do: I'm going to school myself to-morrow morning, and I'll come this way and bring Minnie along with me."

"Nonsense, Toney!" muttered Sir Evas.

"Oh, but, you see, the poor child cried so and was so unhappy, and it's dreadful for children to cry. It's a sin to let them."

"It was most all Mary's fault, Miss," said Mr. Thomas, sheepishly. "I be away before the little un goes."

Here Mary began to whimper audibly.

"Father sold our big clock."

Sir Evas coughed and Toney laughed.

"Of course it's awkward, with no wife to look after your children," said Sir Evas kindly.

"Ah, yes, sir, when my poor missus was alive things went straight, they did."

"And father didn't go out of evenings, did you father?" put in Mary, still sniffing. But this revelation was not what was required of her, for her father immediately suggested she should put Minnie to bed, and Sir Evas rose to go.

Toney was quite subdued for a little while after they left the village, then she remarked:

"Of course he must marry again, uncle. Do you know of a nice woman who would do for him?"

"Good gracious, Toney! What will you say next? I am not going to turn into a—a——"

"But they are your own people, uncle! Well, I'll look one up another day."

"I think, Toney, it's getting late," said Sir Evas, "I mustn't be late for dinner. Let's turn into the park again. I hope you will like your studies tomorrow with the Vicarage people."

"You bet I shall, uncle. We'll soon get to understand each other. Mr. Hales is a downright man. He's the same front and back."

"Front and back?"

"Yes, don't you know—not like society people."

"You are a severe judge, Toney."

"Well, I can't go about with my eyes shut, can I? Oh, dear! I hope poor Crumpet is released, uncle; he's a dull life of it. Would you like to be Aunt

Dove's companion! Gracious stars! I forget you *are* her companion!"

Sir Evas coughed. He found this occupation very useful for filling up gaps, for it gave him time to think about his answer.

"Miss Crump has no home and is paid for doing her light duties."

"Light duties! You just try for one day, uncle! You wouldn't call them light duties then. I'll tell you first——"

"Pray, don't! We must hurry on."

"Well, then, I'll tell you another day. I say, Uncle Dove, suppose Crumpet has a day out given to her soon, and you and I go shares in doing her things! Gracious stars! it would be fun! Now, let's ~~we~~ three have a run. I can beat Trick. I wonder if you can?"

But Sir Evas refused to try. His wife's sitting-room window overlooked this path for a long, long way, and he firmly excused himself.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CHOICE SUPPER.

- Miss Crump usually spent part of her evenings in doing work for herself, because she found that her salary of twenty pounds a year did not suffice for dressing in suitable attire without a good deal of personal exertion on her part. She never had any time to herself during the day, but in the evening, after her supper, she had three hours of blessed peace, during which, if she were not too sleepy, she cut and altered, sewed and trimmed. It must be owned that Miss Crump had not got rid of the feminine weakness of wishing to dress in the fashion. She did not wish to attract notice by dressing dowdily, she said, and this was certainly one of her reasons; but the love of finery lies lurking in many an unlikely breast. It was strong in Miss Crump's nature. When Lady Dove retired to bed she liked Miss Crump to read to her while her maid brushed her hair. During this time she liked a serious book or what she called a "light sermon." It must be appropriate and calming. Perhaps, at night, Miss Crump's voice was more dull and wearisome than usual, or she, Lady Dove, was tired. Be this as it may, her ladyship invariably fell asleep over this light sermon, but she requested her

companion not to stop even if she did "doze off for a moment."

Miss Crump did not like these sermons. She knew them by heart and they all spoke of resignation. Outwardly Miss Crump was certainly resigned, but in her heart she was dumbly impatient and weary of her life. She had ceased to hope or to expect anything pleasant happening to her. She had no outside interests, except one tiresome romance, and but few relations. These were chiefly elderly cousins, who, when they wrote to her—at Christmas and on the anniversary of her father's death—always hoped that she was happy and that she would do all she could to keep her eligible situation. They also trusted that she would show by her devotion to her duties the gratitude she must feel for Lady Dove's kindness in befriending her for so many years.

The elderly cousins were very much afraid that Anne Crump would some day expect them to give her a home, and considering their slender income, this idea must never be encouraged.

Miss Crump did not altogether look forward to having her solitude disturbed by Toney. She had become accustomed to the dull working-time and rather enjoyed it; especially she enjoyed contriving to make an unfashionable dress look like a new one. This was the only channel in which the artistic sense of the little companion could flow, that sense which, in a more or less degree, every one possesses.

Her supper was served by Jane, because no one else would bring it up from the kitchen. This added, of course, to its scantiness and its dulness. Diggins,

the butler, would not mount up two flights of stairs for "poor Miss Crump, who is honely the companion." Ernest, the footman, was afraid of losing caste with Mr. Diggins if he went, though he did not mind stairs, and George could not do it if Ernest was above it; and for the same reason nothing would have induced Mrs. Stone, the head housemaid, to wait on Miss Crump; and as to the kitchen-maid, she was busy with the dinner below. At last Jane was persuaded to bring it up, though she objected bitterly, because she was so shy and hated "waiting at table," as she styled Miss Crump's modest supper. Of course Miss Crump knew all the difficulties surrounding her supper, and every night she felt the misery of being thought of no consequence even by the servants.

Another result of this system was that the supper was a very varied meal. The kitchen people were too busy "to bother about that supper," and Jane did not dare to take upon herself to purloin any of the good things that came out from the dinner. The result was usually that she procured a very small amount of cold meat and some bread and cheese, which was grandly called Miss Crump's supper.

When Toney came in very hungry, she found this grand fare spread out for her and Miss Crump in the sitting-room.

"This is a cold collation, Crumpet, dear. Is this your supper?"

"Oh, anything does for me, dear."

"I imagine that inside you're made just the same as Aunt Dove, and I know I am. What if I cooked

a bit of supper for us, Crumpet, dear? I'm first-rate at cooking. I can toss up anything."

"Oh, no, indeed! It's impossible; it mustn't be done."

"You bet, Mrs. Homes don't know how to do little things! Here, whisk all this into that work-basket and I'll forage. We'll have a rare good supper to-night!"

"Miss Antonia—Toney, dear, what will Lady Dove say? I beseech you!" But Toney's actions, when she was in a hurry, were like greased lightning, and soon the loaf, the dry cheese, and the cold meat, all wrapped up in the small tablecloth, were already in a large basket on their way to the kitchen.

Just then there was a lull in the routine of the kitchen. Dessert had gone in, and Mrs. Homes was sitting down directing Rosa about some dripping, when there was a scuffle and a rush heard and Toney stood before her holding up a large white bundle.

"Lor! Miss, how you frightened me!" said Mrs. Homes.

"I didn't mean to," said Toney cheerfully; "did you think this white thing was a ghost? Well, so it is!"

"A ghost, Miss!" Mrs. Homes started up and Toney's merriment filled the kitchen.

"It's the ghost of our supper! We want the body of it. Now, look, Mrs. Homes, Crumpet and I aren't greedy; but look'ee here, what would you think of that if it was your supper?"

Toney spread out the cloth and showed the cold-mutton bones, the ancient cheese, and the dry loaf.

"Well, Miss!" said Mrs. Homes, raising her head in anger, "I've had no orders about supper upstairs. I've enough to do with the late dinner."

"Now, dear Mrs. Homes, don't be huffy with me! It's not your fault, I'm sure; it's somebody's mistake; but I don't want to give you any more trouble, so if you'll let me stand at your fire I'll soon make things straight. Out home, you know, we let people come and have a bit of firing, if they liked. We were just neighborly there, you see, and I'm a first-rate cook. Real talent that way."

"You, Miss!"

"Well, yes, it's true. My papa often had nothing but what I could cook. This mutton-bone will make a nice little hash. Rosa shall get me a little gravy, and, Mrs. Homes, aren't mushrooms good? Ketchup will do, however, and pepper and salt. Stars! you'll see! There's no time for pudding, but we'll toast this old cheese, and there must be some fruit or something left from the gentry's dinner. I mean to give my chum a real treat. Her appetite's delicate. There's a look of slow liver, don't you think, about Miss Crump?"

There was no withstanding Toney in her busy, earnest mood, and gradually Mrs. Homes' anger began to melt.

"'Tisn't fit work for you, missy. Leave me to do it."

"Fit work! Why, Mrs. Homes, I'm real poor, lots poorer than you are, I bet. Just a poor relation. But, you see, it's as well to make the best of the situation, and Crumpet is tired to-night."

"Her ladyship wouldn't like you being here, missy. If you just go I'll send you up something, and Rosa shall take it. Mr. Diggins will be having his supper."

"But you can't do the cheese in just a homely way, can you, dear Mrs. Homes?"

"Yes, Miss; my poor mother was that fond of it when I was a girl that I often did it for her."

Toney looked hopeful.

"Ah, that's right. Well, I'll go back, if you say I must, and tell Rosa to bring me up a nice tablecloth. Pups was so particular on that score. 'If we have nothing on it, Toney,' he often said, 'let's have it white and clean.'"

"I shouldn't have thought you minded such things, missy," said Mrs. Homes, laughing in spite of herself at Toney's remarks.

"I had to! I'll tell you what, cooky, dear; some day when we have time, if I get a day off my timetable, I'll invite you to supper and do all the cooking."

"Oh, Miss! whatever are you talking about! But if you'll just go up again, I'll see what I can do."

Toney looked regretfully at her cheese, but obeyed. In a few minutes she was back again in the sitting-room. The room looked very different now that it was adorned with choice flowers and that a woman's hand had been at work. Miss Crump, however, was sitting on the edge of her chair trembling with fear. Suppose Lady Dove should come up before Toney returned. Suppose— At last Toney did burst in. Her entrance was always like the rush of fresh air into a hot sick-room.

"I'm very sorry, Crumpet dear; cook wouldn't let me toss you up a little supper. That's what it is to live in a prison house. You must make the best of it. You see we have lost what we had, even."

"Oh, I don't mind about that, indeed I don't. I'm often too tired to eat the mutton; but you, Toney, you haven't had any supper." Trick was curled up in front of the fire and cocked up his ears at the word supper.

"I'm just famished, I'll own. It's dreadful to have an appetite like mine. Never mind, chum; we'll tell stories and I'll make my waistband very tight. That's what the men in the bush do if they can't get any food. I assure you it does for some hours."

"The servants will be so angry! It will look as if I complained, and what will Lady Dove say? Oh, dear, I wish you were not quite so—so——"

This amused Toney immensely, so she started up, woke Trick, and began to examine the furniture with a view to improving the comfort of chum's abode.

"To be in this armchair is like sleeping on deck with no pillow. I'll tell you what, chum, we'll undo it and stuff it again. Next time Uncle Dove goes shopping he shall bring back some nice horsehair. I wonder if we could get some from the horses' tails here. Not, that won't do, but wool. A fleece dried and washed and carded; uncle could give us that."

At this moment Rosa, with a face wreathed with smiles, knocked at the door and entered, carrying a tray on which reposed a supper poor Miss Crump had ever had in her life before. Mrs. Homes had been

touched on her tenderest point, and everything was as if Sir Evas himself had ordered a private repast.

"Is there anything else you can think of, Miss?" asked Rosa, who could not follow the dictates of her heart as Mrs. Homes had set the example. Toney looked critically at the dishes.

"No, Rosa, I'm hungry, so I'm not *very* particular to-night. By the way, don't forget to put something in my hiding-place for to-morrow morning. Plain bread and butter and just something else will do."

Rosa said "Yes, miss," and disappeared with quite a new excitement in her life. Jane, of course, was much offended and recounted her woes to Mrs. Stone. She had never had orders, and if it hadn't been for her Miss Crump wouldn't have had any supper at all, etc., etc. It need only be added that Toney was the subject of conversation in the house-keeper's room that evening, and that Miss Crump's supper was never again a thing without joy.

Lady Dove was congratulating herself that Antonia was upstairs and well out of mischief. Sir Evas was, however, anxious to know why Toney could not come downstairs.

"She has no frock for the evening. I must tell Rivett to do one up for her to-morrow. My old gray silk will do, cut up."

"I've got to go to town to-morrow; I might bring some stuff," said Sir Evas, who was rather tired of his wife's old gray silk, and had a wish to see Toney in something new.

"Stuff! Really, Evas, you don't know how to shop. You would get something that would not wear and

that would spot. This wild girl ought to be dressed in sackcloth."

"Hales would think she was an anchorite—he was preaching about anchorites the other day. After all, Melina, the girl brightens up the house a good deal."

"I'm glad you think so, Evas. I'm sure there has been no peace since she set foot here; but, of course, men——"

Sir Evas knew he had called down a storm on his head, so he said hastily that "as it was a fine night he would have a stroll in the garden," then taking a cigar he went off, leaving his wife to do some important accounts before she sent for Miss Crump.

His ill-luck took him round under the sitting-room window, and, worse, it made him cough just as he looked up at the light shining brightly through the uncurtained glass. In a moment Toney's curly head popped out, for sound against a high wall is carried very distinctly upward.

"Uncle Dove! I'm sure that's your cough! Uncle Dove!"

"Ahem! What is the matter?"

"Well, 'tain't a robber, or fire, or murder, uncle, but just your advice that is wanted. Do you think you'd like to give it to us? We have set our hearts on a fleece of wool."

"A fleece of wool! Good gracious! what for?"

"I can't explain well from up here, I'd have to shout so. Uncle Dove, just step through the little door below and come up the back stairs. Nobody'll see you. I don't mind your cigar, but Miss Crump does, and you must leave that weed somewhere on

the way. Trick doesn't like it very much, either. He'd bark if you brought it here."

"I don't think I want to come, Toney," said Sir Evas, coughing again. What would Melina say if he was heard of in Miss Crump's sitting-room? was his private thought.

"Don't want to come when two ladies wish you, Uncle Dove! Well, I won't ride with you any more or——"

"Just for a minute then, Toney," and Sir Evas slunk in through the side door as indicated and crept up the back stairs.

Toney drew her head in again, laughing.

"It's just to make him sit on that hard chair that I want him! Experience is worth so much more than just words."

"Oh, but, Toney! how could you, and this supper not cleared away, and——" Poor Miss Crump thought seriously at this moment of resigning her situation. These startling doings were too much for her nerves.

"That won't take a minute— Chum, dear, I did not notice it before, but your evening dress is really very shabby. How long have you had it? Pups let me dress as I liked by day so that I pleased him in the evening; but when—well, I made a bonfire of all my dresses before I left. Wish I hadn't. I know Aunt Dove will dress me in gray. I can't bear that color. Oh, there he comes! Isn't he going softly; he's afraid of somebody!"

Toney and Miss Crump cleared away in a few moments, just in time before a very soft knock was heard. Sir Evas, it can be truly affirmed, had not

entered this room for fifteen years; it was quite strange to him. It certainly looked very bare and ugly, except for Toney's flowers.

"There you are! You are a dear! Do you know, uncle, I was so disappointed in you when you said just now that you would not come? Pups never refused a woman's request if he could possibly help it, and I thought there was just a little family likeness between you and him. Very little, of course, because he was just perfect."

"Thank you, Toney. Good evening, Miss Crump. Well, you wild girl, what do you want?" Poor Sir Evas felt shy and awkward, but Toney did not let him off easily.

"Several things. First place, Uncle Dove, didn't you want us at your dinner? I guess you were dull. Now, own up!"

"I don't remember thinking about it," said Sir Evas, who certainly had not given Miss Crump a thought.

"That was real ungrateful. However, you weren't very lively on the terrace, were you? Now, sit in this armchair and tell me if it's comfortable."

Sir Evas was caught in the trap.

"Well, not so soft as it might be. Oh, is that the destination of your fleece of wool," and he laughed outright. "It sounds like the Argonauts."

"I don't mind about it's being a golden fleece, but you must own, uncle, that that isn't a chair which would rest you after doing—" She paused and Miss Crump put in:

"Oh, indeed, Antonia, it's not at all bad, I'm sure."

"Don't, Crumpet. You won't speak the truth—you know it's like boards; but we can do it all ourselves, uncle, if you'll give us a fleece. At home I could do no end of upholstering work, and wool was cheap."

"Oh, it's cheap enough here, worse luck."

"Well, then let's use it and be comfortable. I'll tell the shepherd or somebody you have given leave. I didn't like to do it all out of my own head, you see, uncle, dear."

"Well, certainly! But wouldn't it be easier to buy a new chair?"

"There would be no fun or romance, then! I like to make my chum comfortable. Don't you know the reward of honest labor?"

Sir Evas rose; he felt very guilty, for he was wondering how he could get away unseen and unheard.

"O uncle!" said Toney, rising too and guessing his thoughts; "where did you leave that cigar? Is it smouldering in the grave, as John Brown is doing? You know the Yankee John Brown, don't you? If not, I'll sing it to you."

"Not now, thank you, Toney."

"Now, you are kind and civil. Well, I'll go down with you. I can't come into the drawing-room because I've no frock. I don't mind, you know, because I like you up here best."

"I thought of buying you something to-morrow. I'm going to town and so we cannot have our ride."

"Then bring some pretty stuff, uncle, and plenty of it. It will do for both of us. There, take care not

to fall over Trick. He's quiet at present. Don't rouse him."

Toney politely conducted Sir Evas to the terrace, and strange to say he felt quite cheered by the episode and smiled and smoked contentedly till he re-entered the drawing-room.

CHAPTER IX.

FORGET-ME-NOT.

TONEY was up very early the next morning, and was soon seated before a large desk busily engaged in writing.

“Aunt Dove said I must pin up this time-table, so I had better be on the safe side, but ouaf! it’s rather hard work. When that is done Trick will go out for a walk, and we can begin our gymnastics.”

Toney’s pen flew fast. She was rapid in all she did; she seemed composed of very active and untiring particles. When she had done her writing she ran down, followed by Trick. Then she made a dash into the kitchen for provisions (grub, she called it to herself), and was soon engaged in disposing of her half-sheets of paper. Then off they ran to the park, where the dewy grass and the chorus of bird-life welcomed this new expression of life.

Caw! caw! the rooks were building their nests, lambs were frisking round their mothers, and the colt was enjoying a morning meal.

“It’s only poor me that has to be cooped up all the morning, Trick. Now’s my time for exercise. Come along. I saw some drying poles yesterday, and they’ll do beautifully for my jumping exercises.”

When Sir Evas was being driven quickly down the

avenue, he was astonished to see two tall poles stuck on the opposite side of a flower-bed with cross-bars attached, and Toney, armed with another long pole, was taking a short run, and then making a truly marvellous spring over the poles, she alighted on the flower-bed.

“Good heavens, the girl will break her neck!” Jim pulled up and Sir Evas was down in a moment.

“Did you see me, Uncle Dove? Good, wasn’t it?”

“My dear Toney, a young lady, a——”

“It’s all right—costume on purpose. It develops muscle, you know, and then it’s so useful. I could jump over Beauty if he would stand still.”

“You’ll be kicked to death if you try.”

“Oh, no, don’t be anxious! I say, uncle, you won’t forget the frocks, will you? Chum and I must give an evening party when we have restuffed our chairs.”

Sir Evas was already climbing back into the dog-cart and Jim had just whipped on the mare, when Toney sprang on the step.

“Good heavens! It’s most dangerous!” exclaimed poor Sir Evas.

“Oh, no, it isn’t for me,” laughed Toney, proud of her feat. “I can get off anything going at any rate. You must just throw yourself down away from the carriage. It only wants a little courage and practice. It is quite easy.”

Jim had, however, pulled up, and Toney was not allowed to exhibit her skill in this particular.

“What did your father do with you? Toney, listen, do try and——”

But Toney had skipped off, good advice being never a thing for which she waited long. Sir Evas, looking back before turning the next corner, saw his poor relation just vaulting the cross-bar on the clothes-line, and he went on his way meditating on the extraordinary agility of the female mind and body!

If Sir Evas had received a shock, Lady Dove's next experience was one which made even more impression on her mind than the vaulting did on his.

The breakfast-bell had rung and she walked hurriedly down to read prayers. Toney and Miss Crump were seated side by side, and both looked so demure that a ray of hope dawned on the lady's mind. Her influence never had failed to quiet any one, and now it was going to do its work even with Toney.

Lady Dove read prayers in a very solemn voice. She was usually thinking of the need of discipline for one or other of her audience, and to-day, naturally, her mind reverted to Toney's sins. In the middle of these thoughts, however, she looked up in order to make her voice sound more impressive when, to her horror, her eyes alighted on a large half-sheet of paper pinned on the door of the dining-room. The heading was visible even from her place at table. On it was printed "*Toney's Time-Table.*" Then she suddenly recollected that she had herself told Toney to pin it up, without saying *where* it was to be pinned up. How dreadful to have her door spoiled by pins! Her eyes glanced at the other door through which the servants always entered. Oh, horror! here too was

the pinned half sheet, with the title, "*Toney's Time-Table*," printed on it. What should she do? She came to a very speedy ending of prayers, but as the servants filed out she heard very audible giggles from Rose and Jane.

"Antonia! what have you been doing? What have you pinned up on these doors?" she asked sternly.

"Can't you see, Aunt Dove? It's my time-table. I got up very early this morning to do them. I have so little memory, and I thought I had better just be often reminded, and you said——"

"Take them down, if you please, Miss Crump, and put them in your sitting-room."

Miss Crump obeyed, turning very red.

"Indeed, Lady Dove, I did not know——"

"Sit down to breakfast. You have but little time to eat in and to go to the Vicarage."

"I shan't take long, Aunt Dove. I can bolt my food in no time. Pups said it was wrong, but that some young stomachs seemed to be exceptions to all rules. Mine is an exception."

"Antonia! what indelicate ideas you have!"

"Indelicate! O Aunt Dove! It's in the Bible and prayer-book, 'A proud look and a high stomach.' Is that indelicate?"

"The Bible is not meant to be quoted."

"Is it a mute, too, Aunt Dove?" and Toney laughed.

"Really, Antonia!— Miss Crump, when you come back I shall want you to interview Mrs. Homes. She was very careless over the soufflé; also the books must

be looked over, and I want some notes written, and——

“Light duties,” murmured Toney, thoughtfully, thinking of her conversation with Sir Evas. “Has Miss Crump any more things to do in the morning, Aunt Dove?”

“I am not talking to you, Antonia.”

“No, but I do want to fit myself for the future. You see, Aunt Dove, it would be very saving if I could be your companion, wouldn't it?”

Lady Dove looked at Toney's face, but there was not a shade of a smile on it. Previous to seeing Toney she had thought the same.

“It will be many years before *you* are fit for such a post of trust, Antonia. Miss Crump can always be relied on.”

Miss Crump blushed. It was certainly the first time she had received praise from her hard taskmistress.

“Yes, indeed, Aunt Dove, Miss Crump is a treasure, isn't she? I thought so when I first saw her.”

“Pray, do not be late, Antonia. But first come into the drawing-room, I have a note for you to give to Mr. Hales. I wish he would not preach such long sermons, the horses have to wait at the churchyard-gate too long on Sunday morning.”

As Lady Dove walked along the passage, making an imperious rustle as she swept her long train on the ground, she was thinking of several things of importance to her, and not at all of Antonia, when suddenly, on the door of the smaller drawing-room, she

saw again the terrible words, "*Toney's Time-Table.*" She uttered a little shriek.

"Good gracious, Antonia! What's this?"

"I knew I should forget, Aunt Dove, and you said pin it up, so I've done it on every door downstairs."

Lady Dove tore down the offending paper.

"It took me a long time," said Toney sadly, then her spirits rose; "but never mind, it will impress it, all the same, on my memory, won't it?"

Alas! on the other doors there it was again—"*Toney's Time-Table.*"

"I think—I think, you are th—the— Go, Antonia!"

Toney obeyed by jumping out of the window, a drop of some five feet or more; but Lady Dove was too angry to care what became of "that dreadful girl."

Soon after Toney and Miss Crump might be seen very demurely walking down the avenue on their way to the Vicarage.

"Crumpet, dear, it seems very difficult to please Aunt Dove, doesn't it? I'm afraid she hates me. It's odd, isn't it? I've never done anything to her, have I?"

"O Toney, dear, you mustn't mind; I mean, you see, you don't understand. You are so young and you have such high spirits!"

Toney walked thoughtfully on for some way, her bright eyes staring at the ground.

"No, I don't understand, Crumpet, dear. If I were Aunt Dove I'd make you so happy. You should

just do little things and have a good time, and oh—I could invent high times.”

“People forget all these things when they get older and have the power,” said poor Miss Crump; “and, you see, I’m used to it all now, but Lady Dove praised me this morning,” and Miss Crump blushed again at the remembrance.

“Well, that was rather belated praise, wasn’t it? You have been here fifteen years! Oh, Crumpet! no wonder you’re a fossil!” and Toney laughed happily at the idea.

“I’m afraid I’m not very lively. When I was a girl I had such ideas; oh, yes, such ideas of——”

“Of what?” said Toney, linking her arm into the Crumpet’s thin elbow.

Miss Crump blushed scarlet.

“Of being married, and of somebody loving me very much, and of my working for them. (She dared not say him.)

“Oh, were you ever in love?” Toney said, but the next instant there was a scamper heard and Trick threw himself bodily in dancing joy on his mistress.

“How did he get out? I locked him up. Oh, Trick! you’re incorrigible. Do you know, Crumpet, Trick was Pups’ pet. I couldn’t be cross to him even if he gnawed *your* heels, which he won’t do—don’t look so frightened! But tell me, were you ever really in love?”

“Of course not really. When I was quite young, just before my father died, there was a friend——”

“What was his name?”

"Oh, Toney! it was so long ago, and it was only once that he said——"

"Crumpet, dear! Oh, I am glad that you have something romantic about you, after all!"

"Oh, no, not romantic. He's never written and I've never seen him since, but sometimes I fancy——"

"I declare, Crumpet, there's some hope left in you. I thought there wasn't."

"Oh, no, Toney, indeed you mustn't think that. He was far above me. He was a young man who went into the ministry."

Toney made a face.

"I thought you were going to say that he was a prince in disguise."

"Oh, no! He was very good and he went to be a missionary in Australia."

"No; now, did he? But you've never heard of him again? Oh, he was faithless."

"He was very poor. I dare say by now he's married an Australian lady."

"Then, Crumpet, don't dream of him, if he didn't care for you more than that."

"But the thought has been very helpful to me. He liked me *once*."

"How do you know?" asked Toney, thoughtfully. "If I liked somebody—why, I should just about like them, and if I didn't, well——"

"I'm very grateful; but oh, Toney! indeed I ought not to have mentioned him. He never said anything but once; once he gave me a little bit of forget-me-not."

"Oh! is that all? I've given dozens of pieces. Pups got some seed or plants from England, and yes, I gave it to a nice Kanaka. I hope he won't think I want to be his wife, though he was just the nicest heathen I ever knew."

"Heathen! Oh, Toney! Mr. Faber was a *very* good and holy young man."

"Faber! Faber!" repeated Toney. Then breaking off, as was her manner, she began racing with Trick till they reached the gate leading into the village.

"Look here, Crumpet, we have had a nice walk and a nice talk. You just rest ten minutes here and then go slowly back. It's only time saved from me."

"Oh, but I must go with you. Lady Dove would ask——"

"Well, I'm off; I can't walk slowly any more. Turn back, Crumpet, dear, and say I fled; but I don't think Aunt Dove will talk much about me this morning. *Entre nous*, I shan't like that Miss Silvia Hales. She's pinched in person."

"A pinched person?"

"Yes. She's never developed, you know, but I like Mr. Hales. There's just a jolly twinkle under all that sober look. Ta, ta. I'll think of some amusement for the afternoon if lessons are dull."

Toney disappeared, and Miss Crump walked slowly back instead of hurrying. The morning walk had done her good, and strange to say, she once more built a castle in the air round the once young missionary who had given her the forget-me-not. That flower, now old, faded, and brittle, still reposed in her

Bible, and all Miss Crump's youth and romance were wrapped up in this perishable morsel.

The giver had been the son of a neighboring bookseller, and the two demure children had played together—long ago, oh! so long ago.

CHAPTER X.

THE NEW PUPIL.

SILVIA HALES was sitting in her brother's study reading Green's "History of the English Peoples," but in reality she was listening for Miss Antonia Whitburn's footsteps. Mr. Hales was putting the last touch to his next Sunday's sermon.

"I don't think I shall like that girl at all, Cecil," said Silvia in her soft voice. "From what mother said of her the other day and from what I saw she must be *very* extraordinary."

"She is certainly not commonplace," said the Vicar, smiling at the recollection of Lady Dove's tea-party.

"Most unladylike, isn't she?"

"I shouldn't say that. She has a good deal of spirit."

"Spirit! Really, Cecil! She is not our style of girl at all."

"We certainly don't see many like her, if that is what you mean, Silvia."

Silvia shrugged her thin shoulders and Mrs. Hales came in at this moment.

"We must make a place at this table for our new pupil."

"Mother, your face would tame any wild creature."

"Oh, I hope not. A certain amount of animal spirits is delightful, but I can't help laughing when I think of her coming into the room with that dog."

Silvia mentally shrank from the new pupil. She had been so happy, enjoying alone her brother's teaching, that she hated the change. It was only the need of money that made her agree to the plan. The living was so much impoverished by the glebe remaining unlet, and Amy's schooling was a great tax upon the home resources. Suddenly Silvia looked up and exclaimed:

"There she is! And oh, the dog is there too! We really did not offer to educate a dog! I wish you had been asked to take Jeanie and Maud Hamilton instead."

"Such grand young ladies would have frightened me," said the Vicar, laughing. "Poor Silvia! never mind, we must make the best of our young lady."

"Young lady!" sighed Silvia. "That term does not apply to her."

But, against all expectations, Toney fastened Trick to the scraper and rang the bell in quite a correct fashion. The Vicar hastened to the door. His feelings by no means resembled those of Silvia. Something in Toney's face and in her smile, and above all in her love of children, had touched him. He held out his hand to her and shook it cordially.

"I've come, you see," said Toney, "but what on earth I am to learn I can't think."

"Oh, you'll like lessons with Silvia."

"You think so? I don't. Your sister is one of

the velvety sort of girls— Mr. Hales, I want to consult you.”

“Yes,” he was trying not to smile.

“Do you—have you ever been married?” There was not a smile on Toney’s face, she was too much in earnest for laughter.

“Married! Oh, no, I have married my parish.”

“Then you can’t understand. I thought Uncle Dove would, because, you see, he *is* married.” Here Toney laughed.

“Perhaps my mother— If you’ll come in——”

“Wait a minute. Women are no use in such matters. Pups could always give good advice. Mr. Thomas—you know Minnie’s father wants a wife?”

Mr. Hales was staggered.

“Ah, poor man, but—I did not promise to find wives for my parishioners.”

“It’s not a bad thing, though. If there was a woman who would marry him; if not, he’ll go to the dogs, I know.”

“It really is a good idea,” said Mr. Hales smiling. “I’ll think of it, but perhaps he *ought* to fall in love!”

“Love doesn’t matter much. Pups said ‘a wife that was of use for a man’s grub and his clo’ was the best all-round sort of wife for him, and Minnie is never tidy. That bigger girl is a silly! Don’t you love children? I do.”

“Come in,” said the Vicar. A sadness seemed to possess him at the contrast between this child of nature and his lady patron, as Silvia called Lady Dove.

"Good-by, Trick. I'm going to study now. Be good, Trick, because I've got to be clever."

Toney instinctively felt that she was not liked when Silvia rose languidly to greet her. There was no cordiality in her greeting, but Mrs. Hales' sweet face was kindness itself as she said:

"We have been trying to settle a plan, Miss Whitburn, but without you it was difficult. Silvia reads history aloud every morning and writes out a piece of it afterward. Then she does some French and German with me and some algebra with her brother. Then music—she loves music—and she often goes out sketching with the Hamilton girls."

"I don't know French and German, at least I can talk some French, because we had a French family living near to us. I don't know a word of German, and I don't want to."

"You don't like languages?" asked Mr. Hales.

"Well, I like Greek and Latin awfully. There's some sense in them."

Silvia looked up surprised.

"Oh," said Mr. Hales in a tone of pleasure, "then I shall be of some use to you, I hope."

"But I hate music and drawing and all that rubbish. At least, no, I love pictures, but I can't draw; and as to music, I don't know one note from another, and I can't think how any one else ever does!"

Silvia was again silently scornful.

"And history?" asked Mrs. Hales, smiling.

"I like legendary history—things that you can't prove or argue about. Do you know the story of Owain and his nice lion who fought all his battles?"

"Fairy tales," said Silvia scornfully, "I'm too old for them."

"It was in Pups' jolly book. When Owain had to fight with a giant, the lion jumped right off a high wall of the castle to help him. It's just like Trick. He tore the giant from shoulder to hip, his heart was laid bare, and the giant fell down dead. It is really quite jolly."

"One of Arthur's knights," said Mr. Hales. "I haven't that book on Celtic tales here, but I have read it."

"That's a pity, but never mind. I know them almost by heart and I'll tell them to you, if you like," said Toney, turning to the scornful Silvia, who said "Thank you" in a freezing voice.

"Then they wore such pretty things in those days: yellow satin and peacock's feathers, and had bows and arrows of red yew. I wonder if I could find some here, Mr. Hales? Then the men as well as the women wore pearls and ermine and variegated leather in their shoes. Pups said it meant Cordova leather."

"That would all be very ridiculous now," said Silvia.

"You are like Luned, the gem of light," said Toney, sitting down. "You must hear about her some day. But I'm chattering."

"You must work, Toney. Shall I make out a time-table for you?" said Mrs. Hales.

"Another! Oh, dear!" and Toney sighed. "I wrote out ever so many time-tables and pinned them on all the doors downstairs at Aldersfield House, and

Aunt Dove didn't like it. There's one still on the kitchen door, because, you see, I always go there early for some grub."

Silvia recoiled.

At last Mrs. Hales wrote out a suitable time-table and allowed Toney to plunge into her Greek with Mr. Hales, not hoping for much result, but in this she was mistaken. Toney's education had been man-like, and she was by no means backward with the dead languages. History, too, she had a liking for, but other accomplishments were mostly a blank in her mind.

When the allotted time was over, ending with a little sewing, Toney jumped up and stretched herself.

"It's too long for one sitting. Another time I must have a run between each subject. You see, Mrs. Hales" (the Vicar had gone out after the Greek), "the body is all important. It must be fed with fresh air very frequently. I'm sure Miss Silvia, here, hasn't had enough fresh air. She is the Earl's child, 'A mayden as white as whales' bones.'"

"Whales' bones!" exclaimed Silvia, by no means flattered. "Whalebone is black."

"Pups said it wasn't our whale, but the sea-unicorn's tooth—but at home we always called pale people 'whalebones.'"

"You must go back now. Will some one meet you?" said Mrs. Hales.

"I fancy Crumpet will, but I'll get there before she's far ahead. Good-by. I think lessons here isn't bad if I may have a run out now and then."

Toney disappeared with a rush, which was followed

by the barking of Trick and the bang of the front gate.

"How dreadful," said Silvia. "Oh, mother! how could you let her come here?"

"She is a very intelligent girl and she has beautiful eyes."

"If people have beautiful eyes, you and Cecil forgive them everything," said Silvia.

Mr. Hales came in at this moment.

"Cecil, how dreadful! She called me 'whalebones.' I really think she is a little off her head."

"She is a little wild certainly, but did you notice her eyes, Silvia?"

"There! I said so, just because her eyes are bright, you and mother forgive her her odd manners."

"The windows of the soul— But indeed she has good abilities in some directions at all events."

"She does not know one note from another."

"She is very natural," said Mrs. Hales.

Silvia was silent, but she, nevertheless, allowed a dislike for Toney to take root in her mind.

Toney, in the meanwhile, was hurrying home. Just as she reached the park gate she heard the trot of a horse, and in another moment Lewis Waycott reined in his horse.

"Good morning, Miss Whitburn. Have you been riding?"

"No, I have been driven mentally. I'm so sleepy in consequence I want to run off the stiffness."

"You don't like study?"

"Well, it's not quite natural to me. Do you like dogs and birds?"

"Certainly, especially in September."

"You like killing them. That's horrible! I thought you were like Owain, who liked them for themselves."

"Who might he be, Miss Whitburn?"

"Toney, please. We're friends, aren't we?"

"Friends, of course! I've got a fine hunter for you, if you will ride him."

"Wouldn't I! But, Aunt Dove— well, no, she wouldn't mind if I broke my neck, but she would have to pretend to care, and that would be tiresome for her, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, very; but more so for you! Still, from what I have seen, you will be safe on any animal."

"Do you like white whalebones, Mr. Squire? That's Mr. Hales' sister!"

"Miss Hales is very pretty, people say."

"She's not my sort. I like him."

"The Vicar?"

"Yes. He's kind. Aunt Dove says he preaches too long sermons on Sunday morning. Do you think so?"

"Well, yes, but I'm not partial to sermons."

"Does he mean all he says?"

"I fancy so."

"That's a pity. If so, I can't tell him to be shorter. I won't hurt his feelings. Good-by, Mr. Squire. I should like to ride this afternoon, only I'm going to give Miss Crump a good time."

"She hasn't many, I fear."

"Gracious stars! No! Uncle Dove and I are learning to be companions to Aunt Dove so as to take

her place some day," and with this piece of information Toney put her hands on the gate and vaulted over it.

"She is certainly very original," said Lewis, and he rode home quite thoughtful.

CHAPTER XI.

A KNIGHT-ERRANT.

LADY DOVE was satisfied at luncheon-time that she had done right by Antonia, for she was as quiet as a mouse. Miss Crump had been worked very hard all the morning, but her pale face was not so much as noticed by her employer. Toney, who was beginning to stretch out, as she expressed it to herself, noticed the poor companion's weary look, so she sat and meditated upon a remedy. This it was which kept her so quiet till Lady Dove remarked :

"Sir Evas is coming back by the six o'clock train, Miss Crump. He will bring back with him two gentlemen to dine and sleep. Tell Stone about it. I should like the dinner table flowers done again. They were very heavy looking yesterday. Diggins, even, can do them better when he tries. Also see that Antonia tries on her dress this afternoon. Rivett has cut down my gray silk for her."

"I knew it would be gray!" exclaimed Toney. "Pink is prettier, don't you think, for young people, Aunt Dove?"

"I don't expect you, Antonia, to have a choice."

"Ah! yes, I forgot," said Toney happily. "A poor relation ought to be dressed in gray."

"I wish you wouldn't be so ridiculous, Antonia. I hope Mr. Hales will soon make you like other people. The Hales are poor and proud, and they do not know their place. I must ask him what he thinks of you, but he must be much astonished."

Toney shook her head sadly.

"He won't think much or long about me. I like him, Aunt Dove. He's better than our minister at home. He's a gentleman, and his mother is just first-rate."

"You are decidedly vulgar, Antonia."

"Colonial, Aunt Dove; there's a shade of difference."

"I am going to make a round of calls to-day, but you have no frock tidy enough to come with me, so, Miss Crump, please accompany Antonia for a steady walk."

Toney relapsed into meditation and Lady Dove talked on to Miss Crump, for she always looked upon her as a patient listener.

"I want you to send out the invitations for a dinner party next week. You will find the list on my writing table. There is a Primrose League meeting too on Monday. Just look up the addresses. I must give the dames tea; all our county families have become dames."

"What are dames, Aunt Dove?"

"Ladies of right understanding."

"Then Miss Crump's a dame. She has a very right understanding."

"Ladies of position, Antonia."

When luncheon was finished, Lady Dove kept

Miss Crump running up and down, and in and out, till the carriage came round, and then the poor companion crawled upstairs to her room to put on her walking attire. Toney was preparing some lessons and banged the book down when Miss Crump entered the sitting-room.

“O Crumpet! you look untoasted. You know what I mean, soft and nohow. Are you tired?”

“Oh, no, not more than usual. Lady Dove says you must have a walk.”

“And you, what must you have?” Toney answered.

“Oh, I must go out with you, of course.”

“But you don’t feel wound up for it, do you? It’s all right. I’ve arranged everything. Crumpet, dear, that bonnet don’t suit you. Here is a soft kind of billycock for you, and look, here is my riding skirt which will do beautifully for you, and you shall ride that old pony. You can quite sleep on its back.”

“Oh, I’ve never ridden—besides, Lady Dove!”

“Well, you will see how lovely it will be. You can’t walk my pace. I should be tired to death creeping along with you. I must have exercise.”

Poor Miss Crump felt limp in body and limp in mind; she had even enough energy to resist further, for she had been dreading the walk with Toney and having to keep up with the eager footsteps. But she positively dared not put on a skirt. If they met Lady Dove—if— A slave could not be more under the dominion of his master than was this poor companion under Lady Dove’s power. But Toney never let the

grass grow under her feet. She ran round to the stable and finding only Jim about, she was soon herself saddling the pony with a promptitude and a skill which astonished the young groom.

"Miss Tonia," said Jim afterward, joining her two names with native genius, "Miss Tonia be a real born horsewoman. I bet a shilling she could ride anything as is called horseflesh."

To Toney the old pony was not horseflesh, merely an amiable rocking horse, but when she brought it to the front door she found Miss Crump looking paler and more frightened than usual.

"O Toney!"

"No skirt! Well, never mind, a black shawl will do for to-day." She suddenly lifted the slim figure of Miss Crump off the step and deposited her on to the broad saddle. Then she adjusted her this way and that, till finally the two started off. Miss Crump carefully hid the hand which clung to the pommel till gradually she found that Toney was right: the pony was extremely quiet and his back was so broad that it was almost like sitting in an armchair. The air was sweet, the sun was shining, and gradually a slight pink flush overspread the companion's pale cheeks.

"But this is better than walking for you, Crum-pet?"

"Well, it is nice! perhaps you needn't lead him any more, Toney. It will tire you."

"Till you get quite used to sitting in the arm-chair, I'll lead. Very soon you can do it for yourself. You see, Selim follows me. Poor old boy,

then. Trick, don't you be too joyous. It's not in your time-table, you little demon!"

"Where are we going?" said Miss Crump presently.

"Just across the park," said Toney, who was making for the gap.

Miss Crump relapsed into a sweet silence and a dream circling round Samuel Faber. It was not often that she dared to think of him, and the treat was great. When the gap was reached, or what Toney called a gap, Miss Crump woke up again to the reality of her strange experience.

"Oh! you are not going over there? I—I can't jump the pony!"

"No, Crumpet, you'd be off, sure as fun. Put your hands on my shoulders and your foot in this bank—so. Now, I'll get Selim over if he's any spring left in him."

Toney was up in a moment cantering Selim round and round till the old spirit returned to his old bones, and he safely landed her upon the other side. Getting Miss Crump on again was not a very easy matter, but Toney accomplished it, and now they found themselves on a lovely green ridge in a wood. Here and there the larches were beginning to be tipped with tender green needles, the catkins pensively hung their drooping forms, and the ferns proudly raised their croziers.

Toney pointed out all these things to her companion. Some were new to herself, some she could name and talk about, so all was delightful to her young

mind. Presently they came to a turn in the lovely park.

"I think we must go this way. Do you know, Crumpet, that we are going to see the 'Family Foe?'"

"The Family Foe?"

"Yes. Just to pay a call, you know. It will give you new ideas to neighbor a bit, and then I'll go and meet Uncle Evas. He'll like being met, it will cheer him up, won't it?"

"Oh, but—I must get home, and the gentlemen. No, no, indeed I must not— Toney, I must walk back directly."

"So you shall, but just have a good time now, any way. Yes, there's the house."

Toney took hold of the bridle again, and presently Lewis Waycott, looking out of the library window, saw the strange pair coming slowly along the drive. The frightened look of the companion, her nervous clasp of one pommel, her strange attire inflated by the wind so as to form a small balloon round her, would have raised a smile on any face, but Toney as a contrast completed the picture. Her dark Norfolk jacket and her short skirt, her neat shoes and her sailor hat, round which flew refractory curls, were all so unlike the idea Lewis had formed of ordinary young ladies that he laughed aloud. Then suddenly he stopped.

"That girl is one in a thousand. Why, Jeanie and Maud would not for the world trouble their heads about a nervous companion. Here's a go! All my ladies out! What shall I do? Well, I asked her, so never mind; she's only a girl."

He jumped up and was on the steps before Toney had reached the bell handle. Waycott Hall was a beautiful Elizabethan building, looking very unlike the square, white mansion of the Doves. Turrets and towers, gables and windows, all here was beauty, and Lewis Waycott was justly proud of his ancestral home.

"Miss Whitburn," he said, shaking hands with her and as cordially with Miss Crump. "That is kind of you. I am glad you've come, but unfortunately all the ladies are out."

"That's luck," said Toney calmly. "You see, Mr. Waycott, ladies are rather finicky, even the best of them, and I wanted Crumpet—Miss Crump, I mean—to have a good time. Gracious stars! what a nice house you live in! Pups told me of it, so I thought I'd come and see it with my own eyes, and do you know, Miss Crump has never been here before, though you are next door neighbors."

Lewis looked such a perfect gentleman as he stood on the steps that even Miss Crump felt a glow of pleasure when he warmly shook hands with her.

"Yes, it's much the best way, isn't it? Now, Miss Crump must dismount. This is the old pony you mentioned, I suppose," he added, laughing, "not the Beauty you so kindly exercise."

"Yes, he's made for Miss Crump. This is her first riding lesson!"

"So you again got through into my property? Did you see the board, Miss Crump, 'Trespassers will be prosecuted?'"

"Oh, indeed! I'm so sorry," began Miss Crump, looking distressed.

"Yes, I jumped that fence," added Toney happily. "Don't make it higher, however, or you would have Beauty over it, not this old armchair."

Lewis rang the stable bell, and very soon the two ladies were following him into the drawing-room, Miss Crump now divested of her balloon wrappings.

"There's a chapel here, it belonged to Papist times; and also a haunted room! We have a ghost, you see. Some great-aunt of mine walks there."

"Have you seen her?" asked Toney earnestly.

"Seen her! No, I don't even believe in her! But I've seen those who have seen her," and he laughed.

"Oh!" said Toney, "you don't believe in your family ghost! I'm sorry."

"Of course not, Toney," put in smiling Miss Crump. She was now really using her eyes, for of late she had almost lost the power of seeing anything intelligently, except the things belonging to her daily drudgery.

"Well, I do, and in fairies and the little people and—oh, in heaps more. Do you know, Mr. Waycott, that I think you are like King Leodagan?"

"I'm afraid I have not the honor of knowing him."

"Don't you? He was a nice man. He entertained people very nicely in his castle."

Lewis laughed.

"Anyhow I'm sure if he were here King Leodagan would order tea."

He rang the bell accordingly. "Now, come this way and you shall see the chapel, and the old stone statue of a Waycott who went to Palestine, and some other relics."

Never in all her life had Miss Crump had such an interesting afternoon, and as for Toney she enjoyed herself immensely. All was grist to her mill, and she chatted on with so much effect that her companions were kept very merry. Tea followed, and it was an amusing episode, for Lewis was not a very handy tea-maker and Toney jumped up to relieve him.

"If you had been brought up at home you would be more up to the mark, I imagine. Pups and I had sometimes rare days in the bush. He said no one could make tea as I did."

"Take my place then, Miss Toney," said Lewis, delighted to see the girl's swift motion, full of natural grace, while her bright eyes spoke more than her tongue, and both were in constant service.

"This is quite like the Island of the Mighty, isn't it? Oh, dear! what's the time, Crumpet? We must go. I feel like Cinderella, and soon the clock will strike twelve. At home we never minded about times, but here it is all like a prison. Oh, that dreadful time-table!" and Toney pealed with laughter, so that Miss Crump had to explain about Toney's morning mistake.

Lewis thought he had never laughed so much, but he was obliged to obey Toney's command and to send for her pony.

"This is not like a prison, I hope," he said.

"No, not with you here alone; but I expect your women folk are all finicky too. We have had a rare time. Now, poor Crump has to go back to do endless jobs. Ouaf! but I shall go and meet Uncle Dove."

"I can't go back alone," said Miss Crump nervously; "and it's too far to walk, I'm afraid. Oh, dear, Toney, we ought not to have come."

"That's awkward! Yes, I forgot." Toney stood thoughtfully on one leg.

"I'm going that way," said Lewis. "I'll take Miss Crump back."

"Oh, no, no! I wouldn't hear of it," sighed Miss Crump, alarmed at the very idea of Mr. Waycott's returning with her.

But Toney thought otherwise.

"That will do nicely. You will feel like one of the knights of King Arthur who found a princess in the wood and offered at once to take her home. They were real men, his knights."

Lewis remembered the look of Miss Crump and the old pony, and he could not help silently laughing at the princess idea, but he hid the cause of his merriment. Toney seemed to think it quite natural, and did not even imagine there could be any condescension on his part, so that Lewis suddenly thought how much grander ideals than himself this girl possessed.

"Now, are we ready?" he said, going to the door.

"Oh, Miss Crump must be lifted on, please, Mr. Waycott. I'll do it, but when you get to the gap sh

has to come off, and then you must put her on again after jumping the pony over. He wants encouragement. I'll take Trick with me because he'd *might* have a sudden wish to bite your heels, or else Selim's heels. Trick isn't quite perfect yet."

"Don't you think we had better go round the road?" suggested Lewis.

"There is no time; besides it's more private this way."

Lewis assented quickly. He knew that he dared not meet all his ladies, and in this he felt himself inferior to Toney, whose only thought was of Miss Crump's comfort, not at all of his feelings. Indeed, she gave him credit for possessing none so base.

At the end of the path they separated, Toney running off at a brisk trot toward the station, while Selim, Miss Crump, and Lewis shambled off for the gap in the Dove estate.

Strange to say, now that she had to depend on herself, Miss Crump blossomed out into conversation, but the theme was Toney.

"She's a very wonderful girl, Mr. Waycott. I have never seen any one like her before, have you?"

"No, certainly not," said Lewis, smiling.

"She thinks as much about my pleasure as her own. I really think she thinks more about it, and not mine only."

Lewis was suddenly struck with the pathos of the remark.

"You have not many friends, I fear, about here."

"No, not any; but of course Lady Dove is very

kind to have me. When my father died—he lived at Winchley—she took me in.”

“When I was a boy I knew all the Winchley people. I must have known your father,” said Lewis. All his inclination to laugh was gone.

“He had the drapery shop,” said Miss Crump, forgetting her pride, for Lewis spoke so naturally about the Winchley people.

“Oh, yes, next to Mr. Faber, the bookseller. I knew young Faber; he was very clever and somehow got ordained afterward.”

“He went out to be a missionary,” said Miss Crump, blushing in spite of herself.

“I owe him a debt of gratitude. Once, when I was a boy, I was riding along the road when my pony shied and I was thrown right in the way of a passing carriage. Young Faber was walking by, and at the risk of his own life he made a dash at me and dragged me away. I was stunned, and I didn’t know anything about it till afterwards.”

“Oh, yes, he told me once he had done it, but he did not mention your name,” said Miss Crump, looking intensely happy.

“My dear mother wanted to reward him, but he would accept nothing. I remember her telling me that when I grew up I might, perhaps, be of use to him; but when I came home and inquired for him I was told that his father was dead and that no one knew where he was.”

“He had so few ties here, and he was very poor. The business fell off and he paid all his father’s debts before going to Australia.”

“Well, if ever you hear of him, Miss Crump, let me know. Here is the gap. Now, I must follow my instructions.”

When Lewis got home late that evening, there was a new expression on his face. His ideal of life was higher than it had been.

CHAPTER XII.

NEW ARRIVALS.

AS usual Sir Evas looked out of the carriage window to see whether the brougham or the dogcart was waiting for him. He saw, with silent joy, the top of Jim's irreproachable hat, for Lady Dove would have been truly miserable if any county family had better appointed horses and carriages than herself, always excepting Lady Carew, whose wealth prevented competition. Sir Evas, who cared for none of these things, tried hard to remember that, as the husband of his wife, he was expected to dress as befitted his position. The two gentlemen, brothers, who were with him in the carriage, were distant cousins. One was an old general, an old bachelor, and his brother, who was a much younger man, was engaged to be married to a rich widow. They had promised to come and spend a few days at Aldersfield, to enjoy country air.

"There is the dogcart," said Sir Evas; "I prefer walking home, so Jim shall drive you."

Hardly had the train stopped than there was a rush at the carriage window, and Toney's bright face was thrust in.

"Here I am, Uncle Dove. We've come to walk

home with you. I'm sure you'll like Trick to come and meet you. Here he is. Have you got the parcel? Trick, don't bark. It's only his joy, Uncle Dove; you are quite a favorite of his."

"Toney—Ahem! Miss Whitburn, General Stone, Captain Stone. This young lady is from Australia, and ahem——"

"Don't apologize for me, Uncle Dove. It's no use. Strangers will soon hear my character. Get out now or you'll be whisked on."

"My niece," began Sir Evas, "has only lately——"

"Oh! I'm only step-niece, you know—I'm not a relation that matters, 'no real claim,' Aunt Dove says. Uncle Dove, I caught Jim up a mile off, and your Bess did it in a minute. A mile a minute, not bad, eh? Shied once though, but I had her well in."

"Good heavens! Toney, you didn't drive Bess? Jim is——"

"Don't scold him. You see he wouldn't be rude to a lady."

"Does the young lady often drive you?" asked the old General, gazing with amazement at Toney's lithe figure and general youthful appearance. "Your Bess is a ticklish thoroughbred."

"Hope to drive him often," said Toney politely. "I'm just going to make myself handy about the house, you know, General Stone, and sometimes Jim's wanted to go with the brougham, so it will be handy for me to drive."

The porter came up to take the luggage, and the three gentlemen walked out of the station.

Jim was looking rather conscience-stricken, but Sir

Evas, who never could scold his servants, only said "Ahem! fine evening, Jim," as the young man touched his hat.

"Jim, here's a parcel you must take special care of. Is this it, Uncle Dove?" exclaimed Toney, who saw the name of a shop on one of the packages. "And, please, Captain Stone, you won't let it jerk out if you're behind, will you? It's my new evening frock, Uncle Dove promised to get me. Wasn't it good of him? Men don't usually like shopping."

"Trust me, Miss Whitburn," said the Captain, laughing at the sight of this lively young lady and wondering how Lady Dove liked her.

"General, suppose we race you?" said Toney, going round to Bess' head and patting the beautiful neck. "Are you or Jim going to drive? Oh, it's grand. Uncle Dove and I will take a short cut, and I think we have a fair chance. You look rather nice and something like Uncle Dove."

"Thank you, Miss Whitburn," said the old General, whose face was decidedly kind, but who was somewhat crippled with rheumatism, and not at all anxious to drive the impatient Bess. "I think I prefer being driven; other people's horses are a responsibility."

Toney did not allow Sir Evas a moment's pause, but dragged him off toward the short cut across the fields.

"Jim's explained it all to me," she said. "He's nice, isn't he, Uncle Dove?"

"I hope so, Toney. He has not been long with me."

"Oh, yes, uncle, a whole year! You know about his young woman, don't you?"

"No, I don't, indeed."

"What! all the times you've driven with him you've not inquired about her? Well, I thought English squires were sort of patriarch-people, and you know grooms always have young women."

"You will, I fear, have to modify a good many of your ideas, Toney, and do let me entreat you to—recollect that the General is an elderly man, and——"

"Yes, I like old men. They seem sort of lordly like, don't they, Uncle Evas? All the young ones are snorting and sniffing for the battle, and these old dears are limping out of it."

"The General has been a great man in his day. He was in the Mutiny and had a narrow escape."

"His brother doesn't look so real a man, does he? Now, uncle, can't you walk a bit faster? *You're* not limping out of the battlefield yet. If we hurry up we ought to beat Bess. She's got two miles more to make up with us, but she is a beauty."

"What does it matter, Toney?"

"Just to make it cheerful for the old man and keep him awake. Aunt Dove will be wondering about us, and besides it's fun!"

"It's a wonder you didn't break yours and Jim's neck this morning. By the way, Toney, how did you like your lessons?"

"Jim's neck's safe enough with me. Lessons, well, necessary evils Pups used to say. But oh! Uncle Dove, I've had rare fun this afternoon. I took Crumpet for a ride."

"A ride! Why she has never been on a horse!"

"No—you might have taught her. Still, you know, Selim is not a horse, only an armchair. The difficulty is to fall off, not to stick on him. Where do you think we went?"

"Heaven knows!"

"Well, we went to see Mr. Lewis Waycott. He's very nice, only too polished up with emery paper. Still he was real nice, and showed Crumpet and me everything."

"My dear Toney, hardly—ahem, suitable, was it?"

"What wasn't suitable?" Toney was a little injured.

"Well, taking up Waycott's time with—ahem, Miss Crump."

"Well, but the other day Aunt Dove made him talk to that very ugly old maid—I forget her name——"

"Miss Vivian, the rich owner of Swanlea!"

"Well, it wasn't written on her back anyhow, and she did look stupid. Now, it was real nice to see Crumpet's face lighting up and getting pink with pleasure when he showed her his treasures."

"Of course, of course, I didn't mean——"

"And then Mr. Waycott took Crumpet home because——" Here Toney laughed aloud. "I couldn't quite trust her alone even on Selim, and I had to come and meet you."

"What, Waycott led that old pony home? Toney!"

"Well, but I led it there; what's the difference? He's stronger on his legs than I am."

"Yes, but really, Toney, Miss Crump a—quite a nice person of course, but after all—a—a——"

"Yes, rather a coward. That's true, she'll get over that. You see, she had to hurry home as those 'light duties' had to begin. Uncle Dove, do you know that I've nearly learnt it all up."

"Learnt what up?"

"The 'light duties' for you and me the day Crum-pet has her 'day out.' Oh, gracious stars! I can't think how we shall settle which takes which! I must do the notes, because you *do* write badly, Uncle Dove! I picked up a note of yours you dropped, or somebody dropped, and I could only read *one* word in it all."

"Toney!"

"Well, it's true, but those letters you wrote to me were better. Then the flowers: you'll never like stooping to pick flowers, and your gardener has dreadful taste. Reading aloud. Can you do that? I can't; words run into each other a good deal when I read, so you can read. Then scolding the servants, you must do that——"

"I'm sure I can't do *that*. I meant to say something to Jim about letting you drive, but——"

They both laughed.

"I can't think then whatever will be your share. But about Jim's young woman—do you know, uncle, he's saving up to marry her? He's awfully nice and he saves his tips, only sometimes——"

"Sometimes what?"

"He has a break-out. Just a fling, you know. Out home the men did it regularly."

"I hope Jim didn't——"

"Yes, he did, and we've just made a compact. He's

to give me *all* his tips to keep for him. Won't it be fun? I told him that if he cheated I'd throw him over! I shall just watch. I'm glad the General's with him, as he'll tip him just handsome, don't you think? I wonder what I shall get?"

They had now reached a wood, and both stopped near the gate, for Sir Evas was fairly overcome with laughing.

"Toney, you are the most extraordinary girl!"

"Whatever is the matter, Uncle Dove? Now what *is* extraordinary in helping a poor young fellow that has no mother or sister to confide in? He'll be awfully conscientious, I believe, and give me all his tips. Well, then, you see, if you don't have much loose money about you, you can't drink it. Stephens isn't much help. He's such an old stager, and then he orders Jim about so much."

"And, pray, are you going to write Jim's love letters?"

"No, of course not. Jim's got two young women, uncle, so that would be hard work."

"No! Hardly honorable."

"Oh, yes, he explained it to me: one he walks with, and the other he's promised to. It is the one here that he walks with. It only means that if the other throws him over he'll be engaged to this one. It's not a bad plan, is it?"

"Well, that depends."

"Did you never walk with any one besides Aunt Dove?"

At this moment they saw Lewis Waycott coming toward them. Toney ran to meet him.

"Oh, did you mind? Uncle Dove says that you—" Lewis' handsome face was all smiles.

"Mind! Oh, no! We had a lovely afternoon, didn't we, Miss Whitburn? Refreshing."

"My dear Waycott, you have been victimized by this Australian."

"I never before had such appreciative guests," said Lewis laughing. "But indeed, Sir Evas, won't you let me lend Miss Whitburn my hunter? She has a born talent for riding and taming wild colts."

"No, no, certainly not. Lady Dove would— No, impossible."

"Aunt Honoria will be so sorry to have missed you," said Lewis, turning to Toney, whose hard exercise had painted her cheeks a beautiful color.

"Oh, you must all come and dine with us, Waycott, next week. To-morrow—no, not to-morrow—but Lady Dove will write. Your young cousins must make friends with Toney."

"Miss Crump likes music," put in Toney; "you said your cousins did too. You know I hate it, but—I forgot, come, Uncle Dove, the race! We shall lose," and without further ceremony Toney dragged her uncle away, who could only just call out to Mr. Waycott by way of explanation:

"We are racing my hunter Bess, Waycott. Be thankful you have no Australian niece living with you."

"Well, uncle, I thought I just made time a little cheerier for you. You were precious dull here, and oh! it's not half as nice as home. Pups was a man in a thousand."

"I'm sure he was. His daughter is one in a thousand, too."

"No, I'm just ordinary, but Pups! Oh, he was just a sort of King Arthur. There wasn't a living being he didn't care about—man, woman, child, or beast. He wasn't stiff and proud as you are about Jim."

"I'm sure I didn't mean to be, Toney, but you see——"

"Never mind now. Uncle, come on and don't talk. I see Bess right away beyond the park palings. She'll beat us sure as cheese," and he obeyed.

Lady Dove had come home rather late for her tea. She had paid a series of calls and the ladies had been mostly at home. At all these houses she had discoursed about Toney. At some—these were charitable people—she had laid stress on the advantage it would be to the poor, penniless girl to live with her and receive her education from that poor and learned young clergyman, Mr. Hales, to whom she had given the living of Aldersfield. At the houses of the more worldly she had said that Sir Evas was so kind that he had insisted on befriending a sort of relation, whose father had utterly neglected her and who was left without a penny. She hoped in time to fit her for earning her own living, and, by bestowing much care on her, she hoped to make her look and speak rather more like a lady than she did at present. Australia was a dreadful country, she continued, where evidently there was no etiquette and no manners—in fact, nothing to bring a softening influence to bear

upon young people. She must not mind the trouble, as it was for the poor girl's own good. The last call had been paid on Mrs. Hamilton and Miss Honoria Waycott, and here she found the ladies only just returned from a long drive.

Miss Honoria Waycott was anxious to hear more of the girl who had appeared to rouse some interest in her dear Lewis, but she could not forbear commiserating Lady Dove on having to deal with such an undisciplined nature. Mrs. Hamilton remarked that *her* daughters had never been any trouble to her; they were so gentle and so clever—indeed, they had quite a genius for music. It was so good for young people to have time and opportunity given to them to study some special accomplishment. Had Lady Dove's new inmate any talent?

"Oh, none at all! She is quite untrained and untamed. I fancy she likes the society of servants best, and of all those beneath her. This was always a bad sign."

"Yes, indeed," Mrs. Hamilton answered, making a mental note of this and quite determined that *her* daughters should not associate with Antonia Whitburn. Just as Lady Dove rose to go, the two young ladies came in.

"Do stay for tea, Lady Dove," said Miss Waycott; "I can't think why Lewis is not in. He meant to see some one on business and said he would not go out. Ring the bell for tea, Maud."

"Why, here are some tea things, Aunt Honoria! Lewis must have had a private tea party. Who could have come in?"

Lady Dove excused herself, saying she expected friends, and sailed out of the room, saying to herself: "Of course Mrs. Hamilton means one of *her* girls to be mistress of Waycott Hall. It is certainly a very nice place. That young man is entirely led by women. Poor fellow!"

As she neared home she thought she saw the old pony being led round to the stables by a gentleman. It looked like Lewis Waycott, but as this was an impossibility she dismissed the subject from her mind, and when she entered the drawing-room she rang Miss Crump's bell.

"Miss Crump, if you please, make the tea. Where is Antonia?"

Miss Crump's cheeks were quite pink instead of being, as usual, the color of ancient pastry, but she looked rather more nervous than was her wont.

"She said she would go and meet Sir Evas."

"Meet Sir Evas! Why, the Stones are coming! Miss Crump, is everything ready for them, and have you seen to the flowers?"

"I've not quite done them," said Miss Crump, for the first time equivocating to her employer.

"Very tiresome! However, you can go and finish when the General comes. Rivett tells me the gray dress is ready for Miss Antonia. She must come in this evening. Sir Evas thought it would be a good thing to have her down. I don't. The girl should have no notice taken of her, I'm sure. However, if Sir Evas gets a thing into his head— Now, Miss Crump, if you please, I am rather tired with my drive, we will finish the novel."

Miss Crump obeyed, though her unfinished duties preyed so much on her mind that she made several careless blunders and was severely reprovèd.

“Pray, leave off. It irritates my nerves to hear you stumbling over such easy words. I shall have to listen to that old General this evening; he is very tiresome with his ancient stories, which he expects people to listen to; but he is enormously rich, and I quite expect he will leave Sir Evas his money. Sir Evas is the only man he really likes, and his own brother doesn't require any more money.”

“I hope he will,” murmured Miss Crump, whose mind could no more grasp what “*enormously rich*” meant than she could imagine the number of uncounted stars. Twenty pounds a year had been the only riches she had ever handled. Now and then she wondered what it would be like to be even passing rich, but she had put such dreams away as being quite unprofitable for her, only a poor companion and a tradesman's daughter. Lady Dove went on meditating aloud :

“He is not at all strong. He has heart complaint, or some such thing, but I don't believe he has made his will. Those old men with money are very tiresome. Really we want money sadly to keep up this place and live in it as we ought to live. Instead of that, here are all these new expenses coming upon us.”

Poor Miss Crump felt painfully conscious that her twenty pounds must be a great and unnecessary drain upon the Dove estate, but she could not see how she could dress suitably on less and save five pounds a year so as to have *something* to fall back upon when

the day came, so often predicted by Lady Dove, when she really could no longer afford to keep a companion.

Thus it happened that Miss Crump was not released till the dogcart came dashing up to the front door; then the poor companion rushed distractedly to the dining-room. Just as the General was lowering his gouty foot from its elevated position, Toney, red and breathless, rushed up to him.

"I've won; but Uncle Dove has lost, General Stone. Here he comes, and here is Aunt Dove on the steps."

"Dear General, how are you? Ernest, give General Stone a hand. This lovely spring weather will set you quite up, General. How are you, Henry? My husband has forsaken you, I see."

"No, Aunt Dove, here he is, but he can't talk, he's so blown."

"Antonia!" said Lady Dove horrified, as she saw the girl's general appearance. "Antonia, go to your own room at once. You are very untidy."

Toney needed no second bidding. She remembered Miss Crump and the flowers and was soon in the dining-room.

"Oh, Toney! I *am* late— That ride—it was very nice, but——"

"Ah! yes. According to that time-table I ought to be doing my lessons, but there's time for everything, Pups used to say that. Crumpet, have you written your notes?"

"No, and they must go by post time; but the table too must be pretty, because Lady Dove says the General may leave his money to Sir Evas."

"Well, leave me the table. Flowers know me, they arrange themselves, so don't be uneasy." Miss Crump was only too thankful, and disappeared to finish writing notes.

Toney, left to her own devices, sat down and thought a few moments. Then making a rush into the garden she seized a boy who was weeding, and making him hold a basket, she very soon gathered all the flowers she required.

"Money," she thought laughing. "Well, Pups would be tickled by the idea. The General shall have quite a flowery reception, so as to make him leave his money to Aunt Dove. Gracious stars! She is kind to him!"

When her work was done Toney looked at it with satisfaction.

"It's real pretty! Nice flowers, but they must be hurt at being used as a bait for money! Oh, Dig-gins, I'm going, don't look severe, and mind you give the General the very best of everything to eat, because Aunt Dove says he *may* leave her his money. He can't eat the flowers anyhow!"

When she got upstairs she found Miss Crump, having just finished her task.

"Oh, Toney, you are a kind girl! I never could have done both, and I don't know what Lady Dove would have said."

"There would have been a little breeze, wouldn't there?"

"If you please, Miss Whitburn," said Rivett entering, "you are to dress and go down to dinner, and a sure I've no time to dress you." Rivett had

grown stern and hard in service, and had a profound contempt for Miss Crump.

"It's gray silk," said Toney. "I knew it would be. Never mind, here are some flowers I can use. I'll rig myself up alone, thank you, Rivett; don't wait on me. You know I'm of no consequence." And Rivett retired, a little ashamed of herself.

Miss Crump, of course, helped, and between them Toney was arrayed in an old-fashioned gray dress of Lady Dove's, which Rivett had meant to inherit. With her born love of flowers Toney seized some roses and pinned one here and there on the bodice and skirt and stuck one in her hair. Thus adorned, she made as pretty a picture as loving hearts could desire.

"You do look pretty," said Miss Crump with a smile of real satisfaction. She had slowly been forgetting what beauty was like. "When I come down to tea——"

"Here is a posy for your dress. See, it's the loveliest rose in the greenhouses," and Toney brought it out from a glass in triumph.

"Lady Dove! Oh, Toney!"

"Never mind, I picked it. She would like you to have it, Crumpet, if you had money to leave her. If you don't put it on, chum, dear, I'll——"

The bell rang, and Toney flew downstairs without finishing her sentence.

CHAPTER XIII.

TWO SILK DRESSES.

TONEY's behavior at dinner was all that could be desired, for the simple reason that she felt very sleepy and had some trouble in keeping herself awake to answer even the few questions addressed to her. The old General had taken a fancy to the bright girl who had met them at the station, but he was now agreeably surprised to find at table quite a decorous young lady in gray silk and pretty roses. Lady Dove was also very agreeable, and though she did not address Toney more than was necessary, she was glad to find that she was "awed by society," as she put it to herself. The taming process was going on satisfactorily, she thought, and Antonia's presence made the dinner table look brighter than it would have done without her.

Captain Stone had a passion for politics and buttoned-holed Sir Evas, whose principles were as old-fashioned as correct. He had an intense horror of radicals, though holding all their best ideas. "A good old Tory" and "good old port" were to him things necessary in a gentleman's establishment. General Stone entertained Lady Dove with news of the fashionable and philanthropic world, both which worlds she much appreciated.

"Miss Whitburn is a good walker, I am glad to see," said the General, when dinner had nearly run its dreary course. "You won our race by a foot, as mine had not touched the ground."

"But Uncle Dove was late, so the race was really lost!" said Toney waking up. "We met Mr. Waycott, and that made us a little late."

"Ah! young Lewis Waycott, so he has come back to his property. A fine house, and he is a promising young man, I hear," said the General, turning to Lady Dove.

"I fear he has many of his father's faults," said Lady Dove looking sad. "The house is certainly interesting, but the property is not much."

"He must improve it, but landlords are poor nowadays. He must make a rich marriage."

"Does that mean marrying a lady because she has a lot of money?" said Toney, blushing with indignation, much to the General's amusement and to Lady Dove's secret annoyance.

"Yes, I think that is the plain meaning," said the General smiling.

"No prudent man would do otherwise," said Lady Dove.

"I'm glad to have no money then and that I'm only a poor relation," said Toney in a loud voice, "because then, I suppose, General Stone, no one will ever ask me to marry them for my money."

"Antonia! girls never speak about such things."

"Why not, Aunt Dove? There was a girl out home who was married at sixteen, so I suppose she

had first to speak about it, and anyhow one must form opinions."

"Quite right," said the General. "Then, Miss Whitburn, you wish to marry a penniless gentleman and to live on love in a cottage?"

"I could make the cottage very pretty. In Pups' jolly old book about King Arthur and his knights, it said that there were three things proper for a man to have in his house."

"What were those three things? Pray, tell us," said the General.

"They wouldn't agree with *your* ideas," said Toney meditatively, shaking her head; "besides it belonged to good old times."

"Pray, let us hear them for I belong to those times myself."

"Well, the three things were: 'A virtuous wife, his cushion in his chair, and his harp in tune.'"

"Eh! what's that?" Sir Evas said turning toward Toney.

But Lady Dove rose majestically and Toney followed her into the drawing-room, where Miss Crump was trying to hide herself and her lovely rose in a far corner of the big room.

"Aunt Dove, that old General is a very worldly man, isn't he? He didn't seem to mind at all about love. But it is a dreadful thing to marry any one without loving them very, very much."

"You are not old enough to judge, Antonia. A girl should never talk about such a subject, and in future avoid it if you please. Miss Crump, the flow-

ers were not badly done, though arranged more fantastically than is usual with you."

"I am sorry, but——"

Lady Dove waved her hand.

"Antonia, where did you get those flowers you are wearing? I do not see the reason of your adorning yourself."

"Oh! Aunt Dove, flowers are just the best part of life! and they do like giving pleasure. If I mustn't gather them here, I'm sure Mr. Waycott——"

Lady Dove hastened to put an end to such an idea, but really the girl was terrible. She would not be put down. A vague idea that she would always remain irrepressible made her change the purport of her next remark.

"I did not say you might not pick flowers in moderation, quite in moderation, but I do think that for your personal adornment something less rare——" At this moment Lady Dove's eyes fell on the trembling Miss Crump and her magnificent Maréchal Niel.

"Where did you procure that flower, if you please, Miss Crump?"

"Indeed, Lady Dove——"

"I conclude from my garden; if so, considering your position, I think it very reprehensible conduct on your part."

Toney was at once up in arms.

"How can you say that, Aunt Dove? Why, I took that rose and gave it to Miss Crump myself, and I said that if she did not wear it I would never forgive her."

"And pray, Antonia, who gave you leave to give my flowers away?"

"I thought flowers were meant to be picked, and you did say Miss Crump looked dull, so I thought, Aunt Dove, this would just please you. Why, it gives her a touch of—of— Oh, I can't explain, but she's like a flower somehow herself."

"Nonsense, Antonia!"

"If it is nonsense I shall give her just the free daisies. May I pick the daisies in the park?"

"Indeed, Lady Dove, I said you would not like it," said Miss Crump.

"You must ask me another time, Antonia, for permission to pick flowers. I don't say I shall refuse, but——"

"But some of them are Uncle Dove's flowers, aren't they? I heard him say 'my gardener' this morning."

"Miss Crump, will you go on with the book we began till the gentlemen come in, if you please?"

The poor companion, quite abashed, hastily found the book and turned over the pages, while Toney, who was told to listen, sat bolt upright and in two minutes fell fast asleep in her chair, nodding like a funeral plume.

When the gentlemen came in she did not wake till Miss Crump, seeing her in this position, hastily went up to her to wake her.

"Toney, Toney," she whispered, but the hurried whisper had not sufficiently enlightened Toney as to her present position, for she started up, calling out:

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! this is a dull place," in a loud clear voice.

"Antonia!" said poor Lady Dove, as the old General burst out laughing and Sir Evas said, "Ahem!"

"Gracious stars! Why, I was asleep. What did I say, Uncle Dove?"

"Nothing of consequence, Toney, I'm sure."

"I was dreaming. I think that I was reading Rolin's History to Aunt Dove, but it was Miss Crump's reading that sent me off. Uncle, now, don't you think that the rose in her black frock looks nice?"

"Yes, certainly, charming."

"You like her wearing it, don't you?"

"Yes, yes, certainly," said poor Sir Evas, who was quite unconscious of his wife's frowns given to him behind her fan.

General Stone looked round at the peony-cheeked Miss Crump. He knew the poor companion by sight, and on first meeting her had always given her something between a bow and a nod, and the same greeting when he last caught sight of her, that is if he remembered it, but to-day he found that he had to look at her more closely.

"Don't you like flowers, General Stone?" said Toney.

"Extremely, Miss Whitburn."

"You must call me Toney, please. I'm not out or anything. I never shall be what English people call 'out,' because unless you have money no one cares whether you are out or in."

"I don't think you will ever efface yourself as much as that," said the General with a smile.

"I don't want to efface myself at all; but of course as I can't be of any use for being married for money, other people won't take any notice of me. You said as much at dinner, you know."

"I made a great mistake I see."

"Well, now, you *are* nice to own up! Isn't he, Miss Crump?"

Miss Crump again wished to sink under the ground. Her duty was to handle tea cups and not to agree about the General's niceness. She murmured something unintelligible. Sir Evas had taken Captain Stone to the library to show him a plan for some cottages, leaving Lady Dove on metaphorical thorns. She saw that the General was interested in the girl, and so she dared not scold her before him.

"You know that Miss Crumpet—Crump, I mean—the other is my pet name for her—is very shy. She effaces herself, don't you think?"

"Antonia, my dear," said Lady Dove laughing softly, "you will tire this kind General."

Toney looked anxiously at the General's face, but seeing no token of weariness she continued:

"I was only saying that Miss Crump doesn't make the most of herself. I'm not one bit shy, you see."

"I should not like to disagree with you on that point," said the General with a bow.

"No, it would be no use if you did. Pups said I formed strong opinions at once. Do you?"

"I fear I do."

"Well, now, don't you think Miss Crump effaces herself?"

"I'm sure she does."

"And you don't think that is right, is it? One ought to expand and live all our life. Pups said that. Do tell me, generals ride a good deal, don't they?"

"A good deal. I hear you are a good horsewoman."

"She did not fall off our old pony," put in Lady Dove kindly, as if Toney were five years old.

"But, indeed, Lady Dove, this young lady——"

Toney winked hard at the General, which action almost made him forget his politeness, for he nearly laughed out loud.

"What I mean is, how long does it take to get a good seat? Pups made me ride when I was three years old."

"It depends. A raw recruit now—you must give him three months."

"That is long! I'm teaching some one. Oh, there's Uncle Evas. Where are our frocks?" (This was in a loud whisper.)

"Ah, yes! the parcel must be outside. By and by, my dear——"

But Toney rushed out and soon came back with a large brown paper parcel under her arm.

"What have you been buying, Evas?" said his wife smiling. Her graciousness was almost alarming to those who knew her so often otherwise.

"Just a little stuff for Toney's frock."

"Ah! indeed. Antonia, this is hardly the place——"

"But I do want to see what Uncle Evas' taste is like. You know, General Stone, that this frock I have on is one of Aunt Dove's, cut down——"

"Antonia, bring the parcel here," said Lady Dove.

"And Miss Crump has had that black evening gown for years, she tells me."

"Miss Antonia!" stammered Miss Crump.

"Well, it's very clever of her to keep it years, isn't it, General Stone? Do you have many new suits a year?"

"Why, the General is the most particular man about town," said the Captain, laughing as he came up.

"It's difficult to rig out properly without money, and, you see, Pups didn't leave me any. He got robbed somehow. He never knew where his money went to. We had a public box and dipped into it when necessary, but he always thought I should have some left, only somehow I didn't."

"Antonia, these details are quite unnecessary," said Lady Dove.

"Oh, I'm so sorry," said Toney, "have I bored you, General? But I'm so afraid of becoming mum like Miss Crump, and then I have so much to say."

"My dear Evas!" This from Lady Dove at the sight of the unfolded parcel. She did not at that moment feel any affection for her husband, though she called him "dear!"

"Oh, how lovely! Sky-blue and poppy-red silk dresses. Just lovely, you ducky uncle. That was good of you," and Toney went and delivered two noisy kisses on poor Sir Evas' blushing cheeks. "One is for Miss Crump, and one for me. Oh! General Stone, I hope they will be tacked up before you go."

Lady Dove had great difficulty in keeping to her

rôle of being a kindly and motherly person. The sight of the silks had made her almost speechless.

A silk dress, too, for Miss Crump, and of such a color! It would be always so very visible! How could any one be kept in the background when dressed in bright scarlet or sky-blue? But before the General she could not give vent to her vexation. Toney's delight was, however, quite genuine, and so was her unselfishness.

"Crumpet, dear, look, which will you like best? You are the eldest. General Stone, which color would best suit Miss Crump's complexion? Grown-up people always think of their complexions, and I don't care a bit about mine." At this moment Miss Crump's complexion came nearer matching the bright scarlet silk robe than any other color.

"Blue," he answered, this being the color which at the moment struck his eye, and not because he had any opinion about Miss Crump's complexion.

"Yes, I think so too, and scarlet will do for me. The sky-blue is the prettiest. Who shall make them up, Aunt Dove? Rivett isn't very pleased at having had to make this one."

"We can settle that at another time. Hand that cup of tea, Antonia, and perhaps the gentlemen will like a game of whist. Antonia, you must learn."

Toney laughed.

"I dare say I could play."

"I'm sure, General, if you don't mind showing her a little, Antonia could——"

The General was a great whist player and did not like this plan at all, but of course he bowed politely.

"I know the names of the cards," said Toney demurely.

"Miss Crump, get out the card table, if you please," said Lady Dove, but the General rose this time, remembering his manners toward the poor companion. For the first time since he had visited Aldersfield he and Sir Evas adjusted the card table.

"You had better play as you sit," said Lady Dove, who feared the Captain would not be as patient with an ignorant girl as the General, and Sir Evas was not at all a clever player. Lady Dove did not like cards, and was glad to have made Toney take her place.

The cards were dealt round, and Toney was soon seated opposite the old General.

"Hearts are trumps," said this latter in a tone of resignation. "Miss Antonia, when you see——"

Toney nodded.

"If only it were poker," she muttered, but no one heard her; "or even three-card loo— or—" But the game began.

The cards went round for a few minutes in silence, then Captain Stone looked up and laughed.

"I say, General, you've taken us in. This young lady is no pupil, but an adept."

Toney laughed, and the General was all smiles.

"Well, you see," she said sadly, "Pups liked whist, so I tried to play well, but poker was my favorite."

When the trick was won by Toney's brilliant manœuvres, the General burst out laughing.

"Have you ever played for——"

"No," said Toney, "only just pence, you know; but Pups put a stop to it, and now I wouldn't——"

"Well, that's just as well."

"Oh!" groaned Lady Dove from the recess of her armchair and the depths of her heart. "Oh! the girl is a gambler as well, I'm sure she is! What a serpent I have allowed to enter this Christian home!"

Toney and the General won, and the old man could not conceal his delight, but at this period of time Toney was sent off to bed.

"We can dispense with kisses, Antonia," said Lady Dove.

"But I must thank uncle for his nice present again. Miss Crump and I shall make them up somehow, shan't we?"

"It's very kind, very kind, but——" murmured the poor companion.

Once upstairs Toney went to fetch Trick and danced a jig round the room with him.

"Crumpet, dear, haven't we had a nice day? I'm sure that old General is generous. He'll tip Jim handsomely."

"Oh, Toney, I've been very much distressed," began Miss Crump, but seeing Toney's happy face cloud over she stopped; "at least I mean you mustn't take any notice of me downstairs, I'm used to——"

"Oh, is that all?" said Toney. "You did enjoy that ride now, didn't you?"

"Well, yes, of course, but——"

"I think, Crumpet, that I shall be happy here all the same. There's you and Minnie Thomas and Jim and——"

"I'm sure Sir Evas——"

"Yes, I like him awfully, but, you see, he wants nothing of me."

"I don't know. I think sometimes he is very—I mean he is rather dull. He seems brighter looking since you came."

"Oh, no, it's nothing to do with me, I'm sure of that. He likes to see these old friends."

"I hope the General will leave his fortune to Lady Dove. She seems to say she is in straitened circumstances."

"Oh! that's why she was so sweet to him," said Toney happily. "I couldn't make out why! It must be tiresome to want somebody's money and to have to say things exactly as they would like them. Oh, dear, I couldn't, could you, Crumpet?"

"Of course I couldn't, because I have no rich relations, and no one who has any money to leave me," and Miss Crump actually smiled.

Down below the gentlemen were making a few polite comments on Toney, the General saying to Lady Dove:

"I must congratulate you, Lady Dove, on your young relation. She is so bright and clever."

"She is really no real relation to *me* of course; but poor girl, as you see, she has been so neglected and so badly brought up that in compassion——"

"Indeed, Melina, we could do nothing else," put in Sir Evas.

"She is young and very straightforward; she has certainly the courage of her opinions," added the old nan laughing.

“I’m afraid,” said Lady Dove sadly, “I’m afraid that we shall have a great deal of trouble with her training, but I mean to spare no pains. Evas is of no use in the training of a girl.”

“But indeed, Melina—well, yes, perhaps you are right. She is more likely to train me.” But with a “really, Evas!” his wife retired to bed.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ARMCHAIR.

THE next morning Toney was up very early, but though she looked longingly out of the window, she had a set purpose for early rising which did not admit of a scamper in the park. She slid down the banisters in the most approved fashion and soon found herself in the kitchen, now empty, for the kitchen maid was in some of the back regions having a talk with the boot boy, a forbidden pleasure. Mrs. Homes had somehow remembered Miss Antonia's appetite, and under the dish-cover Toney found her early breakfast. Next Toney made a dash into the garden, and after some time she discovered a gardener, who sent her on to the bailiff's house. This gentleman was just coming out of his house.

"Mr. Woods, you don't know me, do you? I'm the new relation to Sir Evas, and he said I might have a fleece of wool."

"A fleece of wool, Miss Whitburn!" said Mr. Woods smiling. He knew all about Toney, for news was scarce at Aldersfield House and Toney had created quite a new topic of conversation in the house and among the dependents of the Dove estate.

"But what can you be wanting to do with wool, missy?"

Toney did not like the tone of condescension, so she answered gravely :

“I have an armchair and a sofa to restuff. You don't like very hard seats, do you, Mr. Wood? Anyhow, Sir Evas said I might have it.”

Mr. Wood was of course not going against Sir Evas' wish, and he took Toney to the farm where, after some difficulty, some wool properly prepared was found.

“I'll send it round, Miss, when I can find a man with nothing to do.”

“Oh, that may be a long time hence. No, please, Mr. Wood, I'll carry it myself.”

“Indeed you can't, Miss Whitburn!”

But Toney was not to be gainsaid, and it ended in a boy being found there and then, and bidden to carry the wool for the young lady.

Toney was triumphant and led the way to the back door and up the back stairs, till she and her attendant safely reached the shabby sitting-room.

“That will do, Tom, but I could have carried it myself.”

Tom grinned from ear to ear and lumbered down stairs, leaving Toney to deal with her new acquisition as she thought fit. She looked round the room and made a plan, determined that when it was carried out Crumpet and beauty should reign together. Arming herself with a knife and a pair of scissors, she had soon reduced the armchair to a skeleton. She worked on till she was red in the face, when Miss Crump herself came hastily in a little before the breakfast bell rang.

"Oh, Toney! what are you doing?"

"Isn't it lovely? Real nice wool. I used to do all this at home. You see you had to do things yourselves often, if you wanted things done, and the stuffing and fixing is beautiful work! I wish this creton were cleaner. Perhaps this afternoon I could ride to Winchley and get something nice."

"But you are all over wool. How will you get it off?"

This was true, but at that moment the prayer bell rang, and Antonia could only clear a little off her frock before she followed Miss Crump.

The old General was quite ready to draw out Toney, but this morning he found her wonderfully sedate.

"You seem preoccupied, Miss Whitburn," he remarked when there was a pause in the political conversation.

"I'm saying over my Latin verses," said Toney, "and the dates of Napoleon's battles. Do you know them all?"

"I did once, of course. So you are a scholar!"

Toney laughed.

"A scholar! I should think not, General Stone! I am very badly educated, I know. I know very little French, no German, for German is very tiresome. One gets no fun out of it."

Lady Dove was prepared to be gracious this morning, as evidently the rich General had set the fashion.

"My dear Antonia, German is a very useful language. No educated lady acknowledges to ignorance of that language."

"But I'm not a lady, you know, Aunt Dove. I'm just a girl."

"Wherever have you been this morning, Toney?" said Sir Evas, looking at her back. "You seem covered with wool!"

Toney made him a face to show that he was breaking faith with her, but it was too late.

"Wool, Antonia! Where have you been?"

"Just doing a little useful work, Aunt Dove. You know our sitting-room chair was hard as hard. One would think all the Doves of many generations had sat on it and squashed the stuffing to a hard ball. I expect they were big, heavy people."

"Well, that seems a novel occupation," said the General smiling.

"Not to me. I did all our drawing-room chairs; at least Pups and I did it together. Don't you like something that makes you spring up and down, General Stone, like a cork in a tumbler?"

"Antonia!"

"It's a very old custom. The Welsh kings liked soft things, for Arthur had cushions in his chair, and Miss Crump isn't such a hardy person as King Arthur must have been."

Miss Crump was blushing as usual. She did wish Toney would leave her out of the conversation.

"It is very extraordinary, Miss Crump, that you never mentioned that your chair was uncomfortable," said Lady Dove, who would have thought it much more extraordinary had her poor companion breathed this fact to her.

"That's what I say, Aunt Dove. Miss Crump is

much too silent about things, isn't she? She can't come with me this morning because she has so much to do."

"Antonia, I settle the——"

"Take me instead, Miss Antonia," said the General. "I shall like an early walk. Dove, you and Arthur will take a long tramp, I suppose, or shall you ride?"

"Indeed, General, I couldn't hear of your doing such a thing," said Lady Dove quickly, but Toney was delighted.

"Oh, yes, do come, and I'll show you the shortest way to the village."

"It's very good natured of you, I'm sure," added Lady Dove smiling, but in her heart wishing Antonia were not so very forward and so very troublesome.

There was no more time for covering chairs, and very soon Toney and the General were to be seen walking briskly down the avenue.

"Miss Antonia, are you glad you came to England?" he asked.

"Glad!" said Toney, her eyes looking up at the soldierly old man with surprise. "Glad! Oh, no! Would you like to live here?"

"This is a very fine place to live in."

"Do you think so? I don't. It's like a prison. The difficulty I had this morning to get that wool you could hardly believe!"

"But stuffing chairs won't be your sole occupation, I hope."

"But it's the same about everything. I had to go

and get our supper myself. Now when one only has one servant, all goes well."

"You wouldn't like to be rich."

"No; at least, yes, I should very much for some things. Are you rich, General Stone?"

"That depends on what people consider being rich."

"Oh, I don't know I'm sure. I suppose, having always plenty to give away."

"That hardly follows as a natural sequence."

"Well, I want to tell you that I have a lovely plan in my head. Miss Crump has a missionary young man."

"A brother?" said the General smiling.

"No, a young man; don't you know that's the name for a lover? Haven't you ever had a young woman, weren't you in love with—Oh, no, of course not, I forget, you are a bachelor. Well, he's in Australia somewhere, and if he ever came back and one could get him a living here, or a nice little sum of money, she could marry him, couldn't she?"

"My dear Miss Antonia, you are romantic, I see!"

"Romantic! Yes, of course, but if you had been a companion for fifteen years here, wouldn't you like a—a—your—a change, I mean? I can't think how I shall put up with it for one year even."

"And after that?"

"Oh, I shall go and be a companion, too. I'm learning my duties," and Toney laughed happily.

"And what are they?"

"Oh! You couldn't understand. A man can't, you see. Uncle Evas knows better now because——"

"Because?"

"Because he's Aunt Dove's husband! If you were her husband you would understand better too."

"So you think I can be a sort of general dispenser, Miss Antonia?"

"Yes, isn't that a grand title, 'General Dispenser of Good Things?' I wish I could help you to dispense."

"Pray, how would you spend your money?"

Toney laughed again.

"But I have none to spend, you see. Yes, I have ten shillings. That must last a long time, but I expect it will all go for Miss Crump's chair this afternoon."

"Then you will have none."

"Yes, till somebody tips me; but I don't know when that will be, because, you see, I like to earn my tips."

"How can you earn them?"

"Well, at home I would go and work at the store for an afternoon if I wanted some money badly. It was fun, but I don't think Aunt Dove would like me to go to a Winchley shop and serve behind the counter. Would she? She is very proud."

"It would hardly please her if you served behind a Winchley counter," said the General laughing.

"Pups and I were very glad when we had earned a lot and filled our money box. There was always a case turning up. If they were deserving we soon righted them; but it's easier out there than it is here to find out about people."

"So I should imagine."

"I say, General Stone, when you go you'll tip Jim handsomely, won't you? I've promised to keep all his tips for him and his young woman, when he marries."

"Good gracious! Another marriage."

"Yes," said Toney, laughing heartily. "I am a matchmaker; but Pups said early marriages were best, and you can't think Miss Crump is too young, do you?"

"Well, no; but this missionary may have married some one else out there."

"She thinks he's faithful still; I hope he is. What do you think?"

"I've hardly sufficient data to go upon."

"But wouldn't you have been true to your early love?"

Toney little knew that under the old soldier's unromantic exterior was a heart that had always been true to a dead love.

"I expect I should, and you?"

"Yes, always, but you see I'm not in love yet with any one. I don't know whether I shall ever find any one as nice as Pups. I'm glad you say you would be true. That's real nice of you. Well, then, you can feel for Miss Crump, can't you?"

This idea had certainly never entered his head before. Suddenly Miss Crump became interesting to him, though he would not have acknowledged this, for the world, to the fresh young heart whose ideas were all for others.

"I hope I can. Isn't this the best way to the Vicarage?"

"No, this is my way. There's Minnie Thomas to take along. Her sister is quite afraid of me now, and gets her tidy and gives her breakfast in right time."

"What another protégée? You have enough to do, Miss Antonia."

"Do say Toney, because you are a nice man."

"Am I? I did not know it."

"But you are. Good-by. You would frighten my child. Thanks, tenfold, for coming with me."

Toney disappeared and the old man walked home musing on the past which now, at times, became blurred and unsatisfactory. To-day, however, his eyes were a little dim with the dew of past hopes which the fierce blaze of life had so early cut off. "She is like Clarissa; I saw it at the first glance," he said to himself. "Poor child, left to that worldly old woman's care. Evas even daren't stand up against her. Poor child. She isn't worldly yet, certainly, but the force of example is great! I believe she thinks as much about the happiness of that poor little companion as if she were a born princess."

He walked very slowly towards the house dreaming of past days and still wondering about Toney.

As for that young lady herself, she was soon in the highest of spirits. With Trick beside her she made a dash into the Thomas' cottage, then she dived for Minnie and was giving her the usual ride on her back, when Lewis Waycott rode by. He drew in his horse.

"Why, Miss Whitburn, you are carrying a load. What a lucky child that is on your back."

Toney ran up to him, though she did not drop her

burden, but the smiling face was not made less engaging by the two fat baby arms which were clasping her neck.

"I'm off to lessons!" said Toney laughing. "Aren't you glad your school days are over, Mr. Waycott?"

"Uncommonly, but you will soon leave off I should think. There's going to be a ball in my honor in June or July. I hope Lady Dove will let you come."

Toney made a face.

"A ball! Oh, that's for young ladies. Silvia Hales will come, and your cousins, and——"

"I hope so. Won't you?"

"I can only dance with clodhoppers. We had fine dances at home. Besides, here, no, Aunt Dove will think it unsuited to my future prospects! Mr. Waycott, can you stuff chairs? It's hard work. I'm still woolly from the effects."

"I dare say I could if I tried."

"I don't think you could. It's difficult. Pups couldn't do it. Good-by. I must be very proper now for Mr. Hales looks so grave. Here, Trick, race me now."

The trio disappeared, and Lewis rode on wondering why his cousins were such dull young ladies compared with Toney.

Toney was so very quiet and studious this morning that Mr. Hales and his mother were agreeably surprised, and even Silvia was obliged to acknowledge that "Harum Scarum," as she called her, could, at times, sit still.

"I'm glad, Antonia," said Mrs. Hales, "that you are learning to attend. You will soon be accustomed

to our English ways." After this speech Toney jumped up, as it was time to go.

"Don't be too sure, Mrs. Hales; it's only that I was stuffing Crumpet's armchair this morning. That did make me feel so sleepy," and off she went bounding down the garden path with Trick.

CHAPTER XV.

COLORED CHINTZ.

IT was Saturday afternoon, and Toney meditated most anxiously about the new chintz, which must be procured in order to finish Miss Crump's chair. She opened her purse and examined it minutely. It contained ten shillings in gold, a threepenny piece, and a farthing. This was the amount of her worldly goods, and as it did not occur to her to ask Lady Dove for more pocket money she shook her head a little over her small balance.

"It must be done, however. I've got the chair stuffed beautifully and I can't leave it like that. It would look so very odd. Then Crumpet will enjoy it so much, it must be done, that's certain sure."

In her time-table, Saturday afternoon had been put down as a half holiday, but Lady Dove had not troubled her head about procuring any pleasure for the girl. Miss Crump's Saturday afternoons were never a holiday for her; she was counting dozens from the wash, so she was not visible. Sir Evas had gone out with the Captain, and Lady Dove was shut up with her patient dressmaker. For all these reasons Toney felt free to dispose of herself, this being never a difficult feat.

"I'll walk to Winchley," she thought. "The chintz must be of a specially pretty color."

To put on her hat and her walking shoes was the work of a few moments. Then she rushed downstairs, making her way to the library, for from that window ledge she could let herself down upon the gravel walk and save a long round. Toney had a passion for short cuts.

No sooner thought of than it was done, and she was just placing her hands upon the window sill when she was stopped by the General's voice, issuing from the midst of an arm-chair.

"Good heavens, child! Is this suicide? That is much too deep a drop for you."

"Stars!" said Toney laughing; "it might have been for you really frightened me so. I never saw you burrowing in that arm-chair," added Toney, coming towards him. "I say, is it comfortable?"

"What, the arm-chair? Uncommonly, and I was enjoying reading the *Times* in peace."

"You would like other people to enjoy an arm-chair, wouldn't you?"

"Certainly, Miss Toney, as many as possible."

"Well, you see, it's Miss Crump's arm-chair which I am anxious about. The wool is all right, and it's put on first rate, I think. I'll show it to you if you like—but it must have its outer skin, and I'm off to Winchley to fetch it. If Uncle Dove were here I'd take him, but he's exercising the rights of hospitality. King Arthur—in Pups' old book, you know—was very particular about hospitality."

"I'm sure of it."

"I believe you're laughing at me!" said Toney earnestly, but the next moment she too joined in the laugh. "Well, you see, I'm in rather a fix, but if you were Isperir there would be no difficulty."

"I wish I were. What did he do? I conclude he is a gentleman."

"Do you really wish to be like Isperir? Sometimes he's called Esperir. Well, he once said, 'In adversity is the true friend known.'"

"Not a bad saying, but scarcely a very original one, is it, Miss Toney?"

"Ah! but he meant it. He wouldn't mind obliging a friend."

"May I oblige you? Pray allow me this privilege."

"You won't mind if I ask you something?"

"Not at all," and the General sat up, passing his hand over his gray beard to hide a smile.

Toney sat down on the arm of a settee and stretched out her feet in front of her and leant her cheek upon her hand.

"I want you to lend me five shillings, but I cannot pay you back in coin, you know, only in kind."

"Indeed! What kind?"

"I don't know your tastes quite, but I can cut you a lovely whistle, or I can make you several little, useful, handy things. I've brought my tools with me."

The General kept his countenance.

"I must first know what you want five shillings for."

"I told you, didn't I? It's for Miss Crump's chair"

I've got ten shillings and a three-penny bit and a farthing. If the stuff is more, I shall be up a tree."

"Indeed you will!"

"I must keep the three-penny bit for church tomorrow, and the farthing is a keepsake. I couldn't spend it."

"A keepsake!"

"Yes, from our old Kanaka servant. He was so fond of it. I think he said his prayers to it, but I'm not sure; anyhow he gave to me, and I couldn't part with it. But I will pay you back if you just choose what you most want. If Uncle Dove was here he'd understand and I know he'd lend it to me, but I do want to buy the stuff this afternoon, because Aunt Dove may climb up to our room and then—" Tony laughed.

"You would be scolded!"

"I don't mind that, but it's Crump I'm afraid of. She dissolves so soon! Falls to pieces, I mean. It's what Pups called want of stamina."

"You don't want any of that, do you?"

"No, I think not—but I must go— Will you lay down some coin?"

"I'll go with you and see what the cost is. That is, if you'll have me, Miss Toney."

"But the *Times!*" laughed Toney, "and then I shall run quick, and you can't run because of your foot."

"Suppose Jim gets the dog-cart ready? I was told to order it if I wanted air, but I was too lazy."

"First rate! I'll go and help him," and before the General could interfere Toney was out of the window.

"The girl will break her neck as sure as fate," he said, and then after some meditation, he added, "I must certainly secure that whistle!"

Much quicker than was usually the case the dog-cart came round. Toney was driving Jim, and the General who was at the front door exclaimed:

"Am I to trust my neck to you, Miss Toney? Would Esperir have had as much courage as to do that?"

"If you are a soldier of course you will. But don't parley. Bess hates standing still. Jim can go behind. I say, General Stone, is Aunt Dove looking out of any window?"

"I hope not!"

"You won't tell of me, will you? I mean, you'll say you liked my driving you. Just ask me formally, won't you?"

"I shall be delighted, Miss Toney, if you will drive me to Winchley, and still more delighted if you will bring me back safely."

"You are just the nicest General in the whole of the king's army. There, wrap the rug your side and don't think of anything. I'll get you there in no time."

Jim was behaving as a gentleman's servant should. Not a shade of expression passed over his countenance; he merely obeyed, touched his hat repeatedly, and in another moment Bess, guided by those small, strong hands, was dashing along at a first-rate pace. The General was soon reconciled to his situation. He saw at a glance that Toney could drive, and that there was no flaw in her splendid nerve.

"I don't think this exercise is quite included in your time-table, is it, Toney?"

"After Saturday afternoon there is a dash, when—'half holiday.' I studied it before coming out. You see I couldn't stand in a room and do nothing till tea time."

"Hardly; you seem fond of doing."

"Yes, I am. 'Work while ye have the light,' that was Pups' favorite text, and he worked, you bet!"

"Toney, do young ladies use these expressions?"

"I expect not. They just ease their ideas, but I'm only a Bush girl. I say, General, I can fancy this is our buggy, only I ought to be gnawing a piece of apple. I expect you'd make a face at the mangoes and the guavas."

"Now, Miss Toney, I think I have made up my mind. I think one whistle will be sufficient, and I call it cheap at the price."

"I'll rub it up like anything to polish it up well. You *are* a brick, but then suppose it's more than five shillings?"

"We shall soon settle that point, for I see Winchley."

Toney could not resist dashing up the principal street of the small country town with evident pride, and when the party stopped at the "Family Linen Draper" she was soon down and the General followed more slowly.

"Don't you really mind coming? I should like you to see it's all square. I don't think you quite trust me."

"Indeed I do."

When they entered the shop the General sat down and waited for Toney to act as spokeswoman. By this time he was highly interested in the proceedings.

The owner, Mr. Todd, seeing the Aldersfield House dog-cart, hurried forward to wait upon the young lady.

"Good afternoon," began Toney, holding out her hand to the astonished draper, "I want your help, Mr. Todd. I want the very most suitable stuff for covering an arm-chair. It must be very good and durable because I can't afford to buy any more stuff till I'm earning some money myself."

Mr. Todd bowed low, hid a smile, and hurried away.

"Miss Toney, you needn't explain everything," said the General.

"Why not? It's just the best way to make yourself understood. He would bring us lots of things we didn't want, and you would get just impatient. Men always do, even the best of them."

Mr. Todd returned with an armful of goods.

"It's rather dark in this room, Miss, but these cretons are very good and durable. The color will stand sun, and I'm sure you'll be pleased with them."

"I hope so, but the chief thing is to please Miss Crump."

Mr. Todd knew all about Miss Crump, he having succeeded to her father's business, but he was not prepared to hear that her taste was of much importance in the big house.

"Do you mean Miss Crump up at Lady Dove's, Miss? or another lady of that name?"

"You don't think there is another lady of that funny name, do you?" said Toney laughing out loud. "It's Miss Crump, the poor—the companion of Lady Dove; do you know her, Mr. Todd?"

"I may say, Miss, as how I knew her when quite a young person."

"Then, perhaps, you know if she would like this soft brown or this dark crimson best?"

"Miss Crump always had quiet tastes, Miss; but perhaps the creton is for her ladyship."

"No, it's for Miss Crump's own chair. I have just re-stuffed it and I can finish it to-night. I think this dark crimson is best; it's more cheerful, and she *does* want cheering, doesn't she, General Stone?"

"Not when you are with her. Well, is it to be this?"

"I'm sure Miss Crump will be pleased. If you would like to step upstairs, Miss, I have a chair of my own covered with this very material. We have a gentleman lodger in the back room—I may say a gentleman Miss Crump would know—the sofa there is covered with the brown stuff, but in the front room——"

"I'll take your word for it please, Mr. Todd, as I have company with me. I want a good many yards to do it well, and to have a piece over if the arms get dirty. How much is it a yard? I want six yards."

"It's three shillings a yard, Miss, and really cheap for the quality."

Toney took a pencil and began to make a slow calculation, then she lifted her head and looked rather blank at the General.

"It makes eighteen shillings, General. It's three shillings more than I have, besides the whistle money."

"So it is," said the General smiling. "Put it up, Mr. Todd; between us I think we can pay you."

Mr. Todd was smiling, thinking that the gentleman was very funny, and that the young lady was still more odd, when she dived into a purse and brought out her ten-shilling piece and put it down before Mr. Todd with great ceremony.

"You must have two whistles, General," she whispered.

"Yes," he said, "two whistles would make us more than square; but I think I shall prefer only one whistle and the three shillings will be discount."

"Are you sure, Miss, that you won't go upstairs to see the chair before deciding? Our lodger, Mr. Faber—"

"Mr. Faber, a missionary?" exclaimed Toney.

"Well, Miss, it's the same, but he's returned invalided. 'A returned empty' he calls himself, though as for that——"

"Please, give me the parcel, Mr. Todd," said Toney. "Bess, that's the horse, you know, can't bear shopping." The General put down his share of the transaction and the two left the shop.

Toney seized the reins and dashed off in great style, but once out of the town she and Bess became quieter.

"I'm awfully obliged to you, General Stone, I am indeed."

"Pray don't mention it."

"But I must. Lots of Generals—though I don't know many—wouldn't have just obliged a neighbor as you have done. I didn't say much just now, because I was all upside down."

"Were you? What about?"

"Didn't you hear? Why, Mr. Todd said that Mr. Faber was lodging with him! Suppose you had been waiting for years for your 'gin'——"

"Gin? Do you allude to spirituous liquor?"

"Oh, no! Gin is a black man's wife, you know. But suppose you had, you would feel excited if you heard she was come back."

"Possibly, but I doubt it."

"You have a cold heart!" said Toney, laughing again. "You are just like 'Converted Jane.'"

"Converted Jane!"

"Yes, she was my best hen, but she had no heart, no affections. Her husband, 'Plumes,' was just the contrary."

The General again hid his smile.

"But, Miss Toney, this gentleman may have brought back two or three gins!"

"Oh, no!—but, well, I didn't ask, how stupid of me! Promise solemnly, General, that you won't hint to Crummet that Mr. Faber is here! She might die of it."

General Stone had not the least intention of getting into such a confidential conversation with Miss Crump as this implied, and he readily promised.

"Then you see that we have quite a romance to deal with. I love romancing for other people, don't
-1."

"Well, I can't say I do, but I dare say it might improve Miss Crump's happiness."

"We must get them a living, mustn't we? Aunt Dove's given away hers, hasn't she?" said Toney laughing; "and do you know she says Mr. Hales preaches too long sermons. Our minister gave it to us hot and strong from the pulpit. He said we were a money-grubbing lot, and so we were; not Pups, you know, but many of the others."

"I don't think you grub money much, Miss Toney."

"I would for my chum. I'm young, but gracious stars! fancy being aunt's companion for fifteen years!"

"A long apprenticeship, certainly. But if you ship her off to Australia, she won't need your arm-chair."

"No, we must manage better than that. She is not fit for Australia. She'd be smashed up in no time."

"You mean unable to rough it?"

"Yes, and she wouldn't like the scorpions! Nasty things; one ate up all the kid off my shoes one day, and a lot of Pups' books, the leather off them I mean."

"They possess good digestions evidently. Here we are, and there's Lady Dove expecting us and Sir Evas and my brother."

"I just fancy that they were expecting our tombstone back, not us!" said Toney laughing. "Do you know, General, that a very disagreeable man at home had a very appropriate text put on his stone by his step-children. Pups said it wasn't nice of them, but he did laugh when he thought I wasn't looking."

“What was it?” The General saw Toney looking toward Lady Dove, and he saw too how she touched Bess with the whip end so as to dash up with extra speed before the assembled party.

“‘And let all the people say “Amen.”’ So they did, you know. They were resigned.”

Toney pulled up amidst a shower of remarks, except from Sir Evas who knew from experience, not divulged, that she could drive.

“My dear General,” exclaimed Lady Dove, “so you are safe! I assure you I have suffered agonies on your account. One of the maids said she had seen Antonia drive you off.”

“By Jove!” said the Captain, “I didn’t know you were still so reckless, but I give you credit, Miss Antonia, for that last spurt.”

Toney was laughing happily.

“Aunt Dove, the General asked me to drive him to Winchley, and you can’t expect a girl to say no when a visitor wants a favor.”

“You are perfectly reckless, Antonia. Indeed, General——”

“Don’t commiserate me, Lady Dove. We are safe and sound, and I assure you Miss Antonia has taken every care of me.”

Toney whispered something to Jim before he drove round to the back, and then she skipped off the steps.

“Indeed, Aunt Dove, there was nothing in the time-table for me to-day, and I am always afraid of idleness. It’s dangerous for girls.”

“Everything you do is dangerous, Antonia. Go and make yourself presentable for tea. Now, dear

General, do come and rest." Toney walked away, but Sir Evas followed her.

"You gave your aunt a fright, Toney."

"I am sorry, but, Uncle Dove, did you get a nice ride? Didn't you want me?"

"Well, Toney, I didn't think of you. Yes, I did. We met Lewis Waycott, and he asked if you would come and lunch there on Monday with your chaperon, he said."

"He means Crump! Now, that's real kind of him, but those ladies!" Toney made a face. "I don't know how I can behave properly before Miss Honoria and Mrs. Hamilton and the Miss Hamiltons. Ladies here seem to sniff at me a little."

"Toney! such nice ladies too. I don't think *sniffing* is the word you should use."

"Ain't it? Well, then, you must provide me with another. Don't you know the look they put on? They want to say, 'Oh, poor child, such a bringing up over there, no wonder the result is unsatisfactory.' I can't say all that, so I shorten up with '*sniffing*.'"

"You must learn to talk like other ladies, Toney. How did you like the General?"

"Oh! he's the right sort. No face-about and run-away with him! A man of his word. Yes, he's a friend in adversity."

"What adversity have you had to-day? You seem to have enjoyed yourself a good deal."

"You shall see, dear, old, ducky uncle. But don't ask questions now. I say, I've got a headache this evening."

"Have you, Toney; you look remarkably well."

"I can't dine with you to-night, you see. You do eat such a lot, and I haven't time to-day, and fine ladies always say 'a headache,' I notice, when they don't want to do something."

"But it's not quite the truth in your case, is it?"

"You told me I was to speak like other ladies, and then you object! There's no pleasing you! We must cut out our silk dresses and—Just tell Aunt Dove——"

At this moment Lady Dove surprised the two conspirators in the hall.

"Antonia, I don't wish you to come down this evening. You will quite tire out the good General with your chatter. Come down with Miss Crump for late tea."

"Oh! Aunt Dove, thank you, thank you! but you will be dull, won't you? You'll only have Parliament and the crops again, and last night it was crops and Parliament."

Lady Dove did not wait for the end of this sentence. This girl was becoming too great a puzzle for her. Suddenly she called her back.

"Antonia, do you know your catechism?"

"Oh, yes, Aunt Dove; shall I say it to you to-morrow or shall I go to school and teach the piccaninies? You left a dreadful blank for Sunday in the time-table, and I must do something."

"I shall consider it. Evas, pray go in to your tea."

"Oh, Crumpet!" exclaimed Toney to the poor weary woman upstairs. "Oh, Crumpet, crimson is the color for kings! and you'll look quite regal."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PRICE OF A WHISTLE.

THE church at Aldersfield had been so-called "restored," with the exception of Sir Evas Dove's family pew. Lady Dove had seen no necessity for altering her large square seat uplifted over the remains of past Doves. Sir Evas, when appealed to by Mr. Hales, had said, "They might do as they liked," meaning the modern public who wished to restore the old church, but his wife remonstrated and said that she preferred the old ways and that the Dove pew should remain as it was as long as she lived. Sir Evas then knew that it was of no use his making any further appeal to her good nature, and "that they could not do as they liked." Toney found herself on Sunday morning in this exalted position, sitting opposite the General and Lady Dove. Sir Evas and the Captain faced each other, and Miss Crump sat by Toney's side.

The General noticed that Toney was quite absorbed in thought, and, contrary to his expectation, this harum-scarum girl did not look about her. Toney's mind was, in truth, full of longings for her father on this Sunday in the new home. She was thinking of the happy days of her childhood, so that

a weary longing for the past seized her young heart. But gradually she called to mind that her father's greatest wish was that his child's life should be full of happiness. "You must be happy, Toney, if you never think of yourself, but always of others." That had been his own principle through life, and his influence was the strongest Toney had ever felt. He had never liked her to mope or to cry, and Toney felt in honor bound not to give way to despondency now that she was alone to uphold his principles. Of course her nature much helped out this happy frame of mind, but it was also caused by her strong determination to do all that her father had told her. This new life of restraint was certainly full of puzzling questions for her. Her ideas seemed so often at variance with what was expected of her, but how could she be anything but herself, wild, harum-scarum Toney? To change or to pretend to feeling which she did not possess was quite impossible to her.

Opposite Lady Dove's pew, turning to the west, was the gallery for the school children. Mr. Hales had found it impossible to do anything with it because the squire's seat took up so much space that, without this gallery, there was not enough room for the rest of the congregation. The poor children were pushed very close together, and though they were expected to be quiet, they were unable to hear and see much. They, therefore, often spent some of their time in eating sweets during the litany, unless, indeed, Lady Dove happened to look up when in the middle of the fervent response in which she called herself a miserable sinner, then she would shake her

head violently, and hold up a warning finger to the other little miserable sinners opposite to her. To-day, Toney, looking up about this period, saw Minnie Thomas in the pathway of the procession of a lollipop, the first child of the front row putting a huge bull's eye into her mouth to enjoy a suck and then passing it on to her next neighbor. But there was always Lady Dove's eyes to reckon with. Woe to the child who was discovered with it in her mouth! She could neither swallow it or pass it on as long as the penetrating gaze was fixed upon her. She was thus forced to retain the much too large bull's eye for the rest of the litany, certain of a further scolding after service and of a series of punishments during the following week. To-day poor Minnie was the scapegoat, and Toney soon discovered the cause of Lady Dove's loud whisper to herself:

"Naughty child; bad, irreverent girl!"

Minnie saw herself discovered, but the bull's eye was already in her mouth, and making itself visible by the unwonted excrecence of her small cheek.

This was more than Toney's powers of gravity could stand, and the General (who did not turn to the west but sat down bending forward to the east) saw a broad smile on his opposite neighbor's face.

It was fortunate that Sir Evas was unconscious of what was going on, so that Toney recovered her gravity before she disgraced herself too much. During Mr. Hales' sermon she resolutely closed her eyes to avoid all temptation to laughter, for poor Minnie, paralyzed by Lady Dove's gaze, still kept the offending lollipop in her cheek, too miserable to pass it on,

and quite unable to swallow it or diminish its bulk by active sucking.

Miss Crump never looked off her prayer book, but occasionally if she had had a very hard week would fall gently asleep during the sermon, much to Lady Dove's displeasure, who always mentioned it to her afterwards. Although she was very tired Miss Crump could not fall asleep to-day. She had had such an exciting week that her brain was in a tumult, and she reproached herself for great inattention to the sermon. Toney had uprooted old ideas, and the poor companion could not get the thought of Henry Faber and of her short romance out of her head. Where was he? Had he forgotten her? Was he married? Was he rich in worldly goods? Of his saintliness she did not doubt at all. Wherever he was he was leading a holy life, doing much for others and not wasting his life as she was doing. Strange to say, this happy, wild girl, now sitting by her side, had brought back a spark of hope, but this state of excitement seemed painful and unsatisfactory, and she began to regret her past stony condition.

Mr. Hales' sermon was all about the "poor in spirit," and he pointed out that it was not the quiet lazy people, who did neither good nor harm, who were called in the Bible "the poor in spirit," but those great doers of the world who thought nothing of themselves while they gave their lives for others. Miss Crump shook her head. She felt that she was not "poor in spirit;" she was one of the unprofitable people, quite unworthy to be remembered by Henry Faber if he still lived.

During the sermon Sir Evas' thoughts were divided between the wish to build some new cottages for his laborers and his desire that Melina would learn to appreciate Mr. Hales. He was certainly an excellent clergyman, but too much given to taking his own way without consulting his patrons. The old General was turning over an original idea which had nothing to do with the sermon, and the Captain was thinking that his approaching marriage would give him considerably more money to spend on his amusements. Toney was listening to the words and trying to make them fit into her ideas. She settled that Mr. Hales made some remarks which reminded her of her father. So, of course, Mr. Hales must be right.

Once in the churchyard, the tongues of various members of the congregation were unloosed. The Doves' carriage and pair was waiting at the gate, but before going home Lady Dove had a sad duty to perform.

"Antonia, if you please, fetch that little girl with the pink rose in her hat," she said.

Toney made a dash at some frightened school children and seized Minnie's hand, who immediately began to whimper. The bull's eye had just been extracted, but she held it in her hand, not having dared to throw it on the ground.

"Oh, Minnie, don't cry! I've got your hand," said Toney; "don't be frightened."

"Jane gave it me," sobbed Minnie, feeling it sticking very tight in her palm.

Minnie sobbed so much that Toney knelt down and kissed her.

"Oh! Aunt Dove, she couldn't help it; she says, Jane gave it to her."

The General came up at the moment and thought how pretty Toney looked as she put her arm so affectionately round the sobbing child.

"Antonia, do not excuse her!"

"Eh! what's the matter?" asked the General. "Is this a little sinner?"

"Dear General, you see before you a wicked little girl who eats sweets in church, quite big bull's eyes, that won't melt for hours."

"Shocking!" he said in a deep stern voice, which so much impressed Minnie that she began to sob aloud.

"Oh! General Stone, please don't you say that," said Toney. "You don't mean it one bit! I'm sure you ate sweets when you were a boy, only you had no Aunt Dove to find you out."

"Antonia, take the child to Mr. Hales and tell him I wish to have her kept in to-morrow, and punished severely."

"May I plead for her forgiveness?" said the General. "Miss Antonia seems to think the offence was venial."

"Well, you see," added Toney, "she has already been punished, for she had to keep that bull's eye in her mouth all the time and it made her cheek ache, didn't it, Minnie?"

"It nigh choked me," sobbed Minnie.

Whereupon the General laughed so loudly that Lady Dove had to take her cue from him.

"Dear General, your kind heart is, I see, too ten-

der; however, I can refuse you nothing. Minnie, thank this gentleman for saving you from just punishment, and if ever I see that bull's eye again——”

“It's here,” sobbed Minnie, holding out her hand and fancying Lady Dove wished to take it from her.

“Oh, Aunt Dove, she's giving it to you,” said Toney, and the General laughed again.

“Nasty thing! throw it away,” said Lady Dove.

“Jane gave it me,” repeated Minnie between her sobs, trying to throw the offending sweet away, but it stuck too hard.

Quite disgusted, Lady Dove walked on with the amused General, but Toney stayed a few minutes behind to comfort the little girl.

“Minnie, dear, in future, don't take presents in church.”

“I never will,” said Minnie, beginning to repent under Toney's tenderness, “if Jane begs ever so.”

“That's right. Good-by; give me a kiss and rub your eyes.”

Off ran Toney, almost falling upon Lewis Waycott. His party had gone on, but he had pretended that he wanted to speak to the clerk, in order to have a word with Toney.

“We expected you at the church door, Miss Toney, but I see you prefer children.”

“Who can 'we' be who expected me?” said Toney, opening her bright eyes very wide. “I'm sure Miss Waycott and Mrs. Hamilton and the Miss Hamiltons didn't want *me*! People in Sunday clothes feel no end stiffer, don't they? Starched up, as Pups said.”

Lewis looked at Toney's Sunday dress and noticed

it was a very simple print frock, but in his eyes it seemed to suit her.

"Everybody wears Sunday clothes, don't they?" he said.

"Yes; it's a very old institution, Pups said. I wonder who first began it? The first Sunday clothes people must have looked down on their neighbors just awfully, mustn't they?"

"Did you get my invitation?"

Toney laughed.

"Yes, uncle gave it to me on the sly! He didn't dare say right out before Aunt Dove, and, do you know, it's the very first invitation Crumpet has ever had since she came to be Aunt Dove's companion. Why at home she'd had no end of invites to dances and tennis and that sort of thing. But do you really mean it? And how are we to come? I fancy Crumpet will refuse the pony, and it is a long way round."

"Can't you come in the dog-cart?"

"Oh, yes, of course, but General Stone is going away, and Jim must drive him because of getting tipped. But if we come, what will the ladies say?"

"It's my house," said Lewis Waycott, suddenly feeling that he was the squire and the master of Waycott.

"Uncle Dove can't say that I'm sure, but if we come may we leave early and go home by Winchley? I have such a nice romance in my mind, and I want your help. Do you like romances?"

"Immensely, of course!"

"Oh! there is Aunt Dove's finger! Did you see her shake it at poor Minnie who was passing a bull's

eye round, and she had to keep it in her cheek all the service. It looked so funny!"

"No, I wish I had."

"How do you do, Mr. Waycott?" said Lady Dove coming up. "Your party has gone on. I was waiting for Antonia."

"Oh, Aunt Dove, Mr. Waycott wants me and Miss Crump to come to lunch with him to-morrow. May we? Miss Crump must come and meet me, and we'll go on from the village."

Poor Lady Dove's breath seemed taken away. Her companion asked to lunch at Waycott before herself! But she did not lose her temper, as the General was close by.

"Dear Mr. Waycott, you don't mean——"

"Yes, I do. Miss Whitburn thinks we are dull people compared to her folks at home, so I thought——"

"It's really too good-natured of you, but——"

"Miss Crump has never been out to a square meal before, Aunt Dove. Do let her come; she'll brighten up in the evening and won't be so sleepy when she reads to you."

"Of course, Antonia, being a stranger here, does not quite understand that Miss Crump's position will not allow her to visit——"

"Indeed, she doesn't eat with her knife, Mr. Waycott; you should have seen some of our people! Those who called themselves first class. Oh! but Pups said that they were the people we should be most civil to, because those were just the folk who came from the highways and hedges to the supper."

"Melina, dear," said Sir Evas, "the horses must

not be kept standing any longer. The Captain and I will walk on. Come, Toney, get in."

"Well, Mr. Waycott, we will come if Aunt Dove allows it," said Toney happily, "and mind you tell Miss Honoria that we are not so bad as she thinks,—but where is Crumpet, Aunt Dove?"

"She always walks home. Antonia, make haste." Lady Dove's tone was very severe. She was beginning to despair of the girl who saw nothing in the right light and who would not be tamed.

"No, thank you, I'll walk, too," said Toney, putting her head into the brougham; "but, if you please, Aunt Dove, if you don't mind, will you not move your feet? Come out, dear; it's paid for."

Lady Dove uttered a little scream, for the next moment from under her seat out darted Trick, as if he were thirsting for fresh air.

"Now, General Stone, isn't he better than a Christian? I put him in before you started and told him not to move till I told him, and though yours and Aunt Dove's heels must have tempted him sorely, he resisted temptation all the time, and now he'll have a lovely walk and a run home."

Trick was making such a furious noise that any answer was necessarily drowned. Jim shut the door in great haste, and Toney was soon seen flying down the road with Trick after her.

"Oh, that girl, and that dog, both are mad! My dear General, what are we to do? You see how impossible it is to teach her by example."

"Quite impossible, I see."

"I have in vain shown her what an English lady

must be like, and yet— What can I do with her? Of course this can't go on. I must send her to some strict school where——”

“Where she wouldn't stay, I fear,” said the General laughing.

“But with proper severity she could be tamed, for after all she is penniless and she does not seem to realize it at all. Young Lewis Waycott is really too foolish to notice her. I am sure he only asked Miss Crump to lunch to please Antonia. It is absurd and ridiculous.”

“I am afraid that is true.”

“I see you agree with me. Now, Evas is such a coward he can't scold the girl! I shall keep her in solitary confinement a little to see if that will——”

“Have you got a room without a window in it?”

“Without a window?”

“Miss Antonia seems of such an athletic nature that I am afraid she would get out if the room had any means of exit.”

“How shocking! I am glad you suggested it. There must be some large cupboard where she would learn——”

“To see her duty plainer.”

“Exactly so.”

“But to-day she has, as yet, done nothing worse than accept this luncheon party, has she?”

“And put that dog under us! But you can notice for yourself that she sees no difference between a lady and Miss Crump.”

“She certainly has no respect of persons. I fear that sin is proved against her.”

"I am glad you understand what a heavy responsibility I have undertaken!"

"Indeed you have! If I had not to leave you to-morrow I would like to suggest several plans, but——"

"Thank you, you would be a real help, dear General; Evas is worse than useless."

Lady Dove came home from her drive in quite a good humor. The General really understood her great responsibility, and was quite charming.

The bell had just rung when Toney and Miss Crump entered the dining-room. Both looked rather hot, as if they had walked very fast.

"I am afraid," began Miss Crump, "that we are rather——"

"Yes," said Lady Dove, "you are late and you know I expect you to be in the room before the second bell rings. Antonia, you must have dawdled disgracefully."

"I did," said Toney; then she added in a low voice to the General, "but I was trying to get a good note. It's the note that really signifies."

"What note?" asked Sir Evas, who overheard her.

"Don't ask yet, Uncle Dove. I'll show you afterwards."

"I'm sure you will agree with me, General," said Lady Dove, "that Mr. Hales is very long winded. His sermon this morning was so trite and commonplace."

"I seem to have heard his text before, certainly."

"Yes, really not a new idea to be got out of it. If the clergy would spend their time in reading a little

instead of wasting their leisure in visiting cottagers who do not want them, it would be better."

"Teaching me, Aunt Dove, must be waste of time. Oh, dear, I am sorry."

"If it could make you more like a nice English girl, I should call it profitable work."

"Aunt Dove, may I go to the afternoon service and take a walk afterwards? My legs are quite stiff on Sunday."

"I am going to Hunter's farm, Toney," said Sir Evas; "if you like to join me there at half past four we could get back by five o'clock tea."

"Thank you, dear Uncle Dove. That will fit well, and if by chance we missed, you won't be anxious. It's some compensation, isn't it, General Stone, for being a poor relation, that Aunt Dove won't mind at all if I don't appear? Pups was a little nervous, though he never showed it, if I started off on a tramp."

"No one could expect you not to reappear, Miss Toney," said the General.

"A bad penny," chimed in the Captain.

Hardly had the General settled himself in his favorite arm-chair in the library, when the door was opened very gently and Toney entered on tip-toe.

"Are you asleep?"

"No; but pray, Miss Toney, don't jump out of the window again."

"Here it is. Listen!" A sharp and piercing whistle sounded in the General's ears and made him nearly jump out of his chair.

"Isn't it beautiful? It made me late, but I was so

afraid you wouldn't have it in time, as you go tomorrow. Do you like the tone? You know I'm not musical, but it sounded clear and very distinct to me. Poor Crumpet has so many nerves that she could only listen to it when her ears were both stopped up. That was a good sign, wasn't it?"

"Good gracious! I join issue with Miss Crump."

"Oh! don't you like it? See, it's beautifully polished; I rubbed it so hard my hand ached with the labor of it."

The General would not be ungrateful for the world, so now he began to admire it.

"Oh! Miss Toney, it is really beautiful, worth more than your debt, I'm sure."

"So we are quits? That is nice. You can use it in London to call a cab or the bobbies."

"I should have the whole force at once, if they heard that."

"But if robbers came you would be really glad. Are you quite satisfied?"

"Oh, quite! But, Toney, you have only the farthing left for your private expenses."

"Yes, that's all."

"How shall you get some more?"

"Well, work for it somehow. Perhaps Uncle Dove would like to have a whistle."

"Look here, Toney, here is my address, and if ever you want any honestly earned money send me a whistle; I think I could dispose of some for you."

"Oh, you are the very best General that ever lived! Now, I must run. I've got quite an idea. I'll tell you if it comes to anything. Perhaps I shall want

your help, and please, if I am late, do talk to Aunt Dove a great deal and she won't think of me. You know she likes talking to you because of your money."

"Because of my money?" The General kept his countenance.

"Yes, you are rich, and you may leave it or must—I forget which—to this impoverished estate."

"Yes, exactly so; I thought as much."

"Still, I'm very glad you won't leave your money to me; it would be tiresome to have to agree with you."

"Would it?"

"Yes; for instance, I couldn't drive with you in that shut-up box of a carriage, and I couldn't pretend to like it as Aunt Dove does, and I expect there would be a heap of things like that."

"Wouldn't you do all that, Toney, for, say—a few thousand pounds?"

"No, I really couldn't! But I do like you awfully. It's very few generals that would see things as you do. I expect the Queen would trust you with the regiments anywhere."

"I'm afraid not now. I'm on the retired list, Toney; not worth much."

"Oh, yes, you are. Well, good-by, you won't lose the whistle, because it's really a successful one."

"I'll keep it always on one condition, that is, you'll go out of the door instead of the window." And Toney complied because the General was so very 'delightfully understanding.

CHAPTER XVII.

CLEARING THE BUSH.

LADY DOVE had meant Miss Crump to accompany Toney to church, though it would mean giving up being read to sleep by her companion. She was delighted at the idea of getting rid of the girl for the whole afternoon, but she had said nothing about these wishes, and Toney did not desire Miss Crump's company. She found her sitting upstairs, looking weary and depressed.

"Oh, Toney! your chair is comfortable even without your beautiful chintz. It really rests my back, but I'm afraid if Lady Dove finds out that——"

"Don't be afraid, please, dear Crumpet. I want to tuck you up so that you may have a good long sleep."

"But I must come with you."

"Indeed you must not. I shall meet Uncle Dove, perhaps, and everything is settled. Now here is my Bush shawl to cover you with. It was so useful in our humpy—that's a sort of shed Pups and I had in the Bush. Oh! we had rare fun! Do you want a book, or will you think? Thinking is so nice. Suppose you have a long think about somebody you like very much."

Miss Crump blushed scarlet.

"Oh, Toney! I'm sure that would not be right. It only makes one discontented, and I ought to be grateful."

"I don't see much that you have to be grateful for, but it's better to hunt till one finds something. Pups said you most in general could, but he hadn't been here fifteen years! I'll tell you what, Crumpet, you must have a little house of your own, a vicarage, you know, and I'll come and rig it up s̄pry. A pony carriage would be useful. You must have some old pony you wouldn't mind driving. With plenty of fresh air, you would soon get some red in your cheeks."

"Oh, indeed, Toney, if you don't mind I would rather not think about such fancy pictures. There's my bell!"

The poor companion started up and hurried away, but Toney, revolving several things in her mind as to the meaning of the bell, took to her heels, and was half down the avenue before Miss Crump returned to look for her and to tell that her Lady Dove wished Miss Antonia to be accompanied to church.

"Separation day," thought Toney, "was a good name for the parting of Queensland and New South Wales. I think Aunt Dove is Queensland and I'm New South Wales. We must some day have a separation day, but there's Crumpet. She ought to have first turn. Then, dear old Uncle Dove! I shouldn't like to leave him. This is a puzzle!"

When she reached Aldersfield Church, Mr. Hales was walking up the churchyard path.

"You must have hurried to get here in time, Miss

Whitburn. In the afternoon we never have any one from Aldersfield House except the servants."

"That's why I've come," said Toney, laughing. "At least, no, not quite. I wanted to come, and also I've business at Winchley afterward, but if you preach a very long sermon I shall not have time. You see, I'm like a prisoner. I've only just escaped having Miss Crump with me now!"

"I shall not preach at all. I only say a few words from the lectern." The Vicar smiled, for he sincerely pitied the prisoner.

"That is quite enough if one remembers. But, Mr. Hales, do just look at me hard if I forget or cough very loud. Pups always did. Sometimes my legs feel all on the run in church, and I have to keep them down tight. It's real hard work!"

Toney did not wait for the answer. In another moment she was in the big, square pew all alone trying very hard to keep her legs still and her feet in first position.

As Mr. Hales forgot all about her, she must have succeeded pretty well, but hardly was she out of the porch than Silvia Hales saw her running with all her might down the village road leading to Winchley.

To see Toney run made most people turn round and look admiringly at her. She ran so beautifully that she hardly seemed to touch the ground.

"Oh," said Silvia to her mother, "I do think that girl is *too* extraordinary. I wish Cecil would tell her that she is a very bad example to the village."

"But I don't think that she is, dear. I hear Minnie Thomas talks of no one else. She has a bright,

affectionate nature, and she has been accustomed to be her own mistress."

"The Hamiltons say she is coming to lunch tomorrow and that they quite dread it, but that Mr. Waycott is so much amused by her being able to ride so well that he insists on asking her."

Mr. Hales joined his mother.

"You might ask Miss Whitburn to sit with you, mother, in the afternoon. She looked very lonely in the big pew."

"Oh, please don't," exclaimed Silvia. "I shall never be able to attend if that wild girl is near me. She has just now run down the street as if she were pursued by a mad bull."

Toney had indeed no time to waste. She wanted to see Mr. Faber in order to find out if he had a wife, and then to get home again soon after five o'clock.

Happily for her a nicely dressed person passed her driving a little pony cart.

"Will you give me a lift?" said Toney, waving her arms.

The driver stopped. She had no knowledge of Toney, but she was a good-natured woman.

"Oh, certainly, my dear. Can you get in?"

Toney jumped up with the agility of a chamois.

"That is luck! I've some particular business at Winchley, and time is pressing."

"It won't take us ten minutes now. Whereabouts do you want to go, my dear?"

"I want to go to Mr. Todd's, the family draper."

"Dear me, that is strange! I am Mr. Todd's wife."

Toney was delighted and nearly embraced her companion.

“Gracious stars! That is fortunate! I thought he must have a wife, as he was a ‘family’ draper. I want to see Mr. Faber, your lodger! Is he very ill, at death’s door, or is he a pretty brisk invalid?”

Mrs. Todd laughed.

“Poor gentleman! He is so good and such a pious missionary, but the doctor says the climate has quite knocked him up. He is already better, but he is in rather low spirits.”

“You see, Mrs. Todd, he comes from Australia, and so do I. He may know people I know— At least he does, and I should like a talk with him. I’m only Lady Dove’s poor relation.”

Mrs. Todd was a little upset. She did not understand this strange, outspoken young lady; but she was a kind, motherly person, and Toney’s manner was decided. Mr. Todd, on the death of his first wife, had married again, but the present Mrs. Todd was not from these parts, and did not know all the past histories of Winchley.

“I’m sure he would like a talk with you,” she answered; “but perhaps Lady Dove——”

“She doesn’t know I’ve come, so it’s all right,” said Toney, laughing. “I’m only a girl; it doesn’t matter what I do.”

Mrs. Todd did not quite agree with Toney. She had strict ideas of propriety, but she was quite unable to decide what was her duty. Mr. Todd was away, and she had no one to whom she could appeal. If they both came from Australia, of course they

must have been neighbors, and neighbors like a chat.

“Don’t you think, Miss, that if you waited till——”

“No, I can’t wait; it’s a question of life and death.”

“Oh, dear, is it, Miss? Here we are. Mr. Faber is in his sitting-room. He couldn’t get to church this morning. My daughter—by my first husband—is settled near here, so I drove over to see her, she having been ill, and that’s how it was, you see, for we don’t usually take the cart out on Sundays.”

Toney was hardly listening. How should she first begin her conversation with Mr. Faber? Toney turned over all the plans she could think of, but each seemed difficult or impossible.

Mrs. Todd ushered Toney upstairs, and knocking at the door, she said:

“Mr. Faber, here is a young lady who wants to see you about Australia. I’m sure, sir, you’re wanting your tea, and I’ll go and fetch it for you at once.”

Mr. Faber was sitting by a fire holding a book in his hand. As he hastily rose to receive the lady, he was surprised to see a tall girl, with a face so bright that it spoke to him of health and sunshine, but he saw at a glance that his visitor was quite unknown to him.

“I beg your pardon—at least I don’t, because we always neighbor easily at home, don’t we? Do you know Georgeport? That’s where I was chiefly. My father was doctor there, and I heard you had come from Queensland, so—so—” Toney stopped short. She was thinking that Miss Crump’s young man did

look as good as could be. He had a thin, pale face, but there was an expression of great spirituality on it, which Toney expressed to herself as "something just heaven-blue" about it.

"It's very kind of you, indeed. I had a great friend at Georgeport, a Mr. Tailor. He met me once in the Bush and nursed me back to life."

"Mr. Tailor! I knew him! Pups said he was made of the right stuff; but hadn't he funny red hair?" said Toney, laughing happily. She was no longer puzzled now that she had found a link.

"Shall you go back when you are well? I mean, have you a home out there, or shall you stay here? Because if you do go back you wouldn't mind taking some messages for me."

"I shall never go back. My health will compel me to stay in England," he said sadly.

"Oh, then," said Toney happily, "you'll get a living here."

Mr. Faber looked up again. It did not seem extraordinary to him that his visitor should take an interest in his affairs, for in Australia every one takes an interest in his neighbor's doings, but still he was a little puzzled.

"You live now in Winchley, I suppose? If so, you must know that I have come home without interest of any sort. My father was a bookseller here. I don't expect to get a living, but when I am strong enough I hope to begin work again. God's vineyard is large."

"I don't live in Winchley, but with Aunt Dove at Aldersfield House, and there's somebody there who

knows you very well, that's why I've come here to-day; only she doesn't know you've come back. I thought I'd come and spy the land first, and just break it to her, too, so that it shouldn't come all on a flop on her."

Mr. Faber was silent from astonishment. He had been thinking much about Anne Crump, and wondering what had become of her, but he had not dared to ask. He did not even know that she was still with Lady Dove. The knowledge, however, was not of much use, for he had come back as poor as he had started, having nothing to show for his fifteen years' labors but such reward as is written in heaven and accounted of very little value on earth.

"I conclude you mean Miss Crump," he said slowly.

"Of course! We're chums, you see, and as I heard by chance that you were here—she had told me about knowing you—I thought old friends should meet; but if you were—well, married, and had pickaninies, I thought she would like to hear about it before seeing you, and, in fact, you see, I've come to clear the bush."

"How is she? It's a long time since we met, but misfortunes overtook us both in youth, and since then——"

"Why didn't you write?" said Toney decidedly. "Pups said he never could understand why, out there, folks gave up their friends and so often didn't write home. There was one man Pups doctored in the Bush—well, he was dying, and had saved a jolly round sum in the bank. So Pups said, 'You'd better

make a will, Mr. Peel,' but the poor man told him he really couldn't remember the name of the relations he wanted to leave his money to, though they had been good to him when he was a kid. That's truth!"

Toney had run on to allow Mr. Faber to collect his thoughts, but as Mrs. Todd's footsteps were now heard accompanied by a rattle of teacups, Toney had to make the plunge.

"I must go, Mr. Faber. Miss Crump will be glad to hear of you. What shall I say to her and when shall she come and see you? No, you'd better call on us. I've been stuffing her an easy-chair. It's dreadful to be a companion for fifteen years, I mean to Aunt Dove, and to have no relations or friends, you know. She wants cheering up after that experience. Ouaf!" and Toney fanned herself with her gloves to give full weight to Miss Crump's lonely condition.

"She isn't married or engaged?" stammered Mr. Faber.

"No! but she thought you were, as you never wrote."

"I had no prospects—I could not claim any right——"

Mrs. Todd's entrance stopped him, and Toney knew she must go.

"I must use my legs and get home like lightning or Aunt Dove will ask questions. England isn't a free place at all like Australia. Good-by, Mrs. Todd. Mr. Faber knows a friend of mine, such a nice red-haired man; and he's promised to come and see me and have a talk."

"Indeed, Miss! Won't you stay to tea?"

"No, I should like it, but I mustn't. I live by a time-table now."

In another moment Toney was gone, and Mrs. Todd was left to express her astonishment to her lodger.

"Lady Dove's niece, too! Her ladyship's as proud as anything, but I'm sure this young lady is quite friendly. Still she isn't like other young ladies. So you really know a friend of hers?"

"Yes, Mrs. Todd, she isn't an impostor," and Mr. Faber smiled.

"Well, now, I'm glad to hear you say that. You do hear of such strange tales in the papers that one half expects to be deceived. Of course now she knows Miss Crump, who knows you, Mr. Todd said the other day. Well, to be sure, not that she is often seen here, but if I should ask her to tea you could renew your acquaintance. Mr. Todd says her father and yours were neighbors."

"I am afraid she might not wish to come. Thank you, Mrs. Todd, I have all I want," and Mr. Faber sat dreaming over his lonely cup of tea.

When Toney entered the drawing-room she saw at a glance that the General had been as good as his word. He was entertaining Lady Dove, and Miss Crump was still sitting listlessly by the teatable. Toney looked brilliantly happy and was quite ready to show it when she burst into the room, fanning herself with her hat.

"Antonia, you are late! Sir Evas said he had missed you, and he has gone out again."

The General interposed.

"You see, Lady Dove, house property in London is every year becoming more valuable. I can let my houses for twice the rent which I took formerly."

"You have always managed your property so well, dear General, I'm sure you must be puzzled at times to find a means of spending your income, for now you give no dinners——"

"There are always people who will act proxy," said the General, smiling, "but I must own to having a saving disposition. When I see the extravagance of some people——"

"Exactly so. With all our heavy expenses here, I have determined never to get into debt."

"It is all the more praiseworthy of you to undertake new burdens," answered the General, looking at Toney, who was now drinking unnumbered cups of tea by Miss Crump's side.

"Indeed it is a very heavy responsibility. But where was the girl to go? What was to become of her? No, I told Evas that our duty was plain, and that we must not shrink from the consequences."

"I consider you deserve much credit. It is not *every one* who could willingly have taken a penniless girl when money was an object. I really and sincerely hope she may soon earn enough to keep herself, or by some other means that you may be relieved from such a burden."

Lady Dove might have found a pleasant answer, but at this moment Toney herself came forward.

"I *was* hungry, Aunt Dove. It makes me think of one of our special picnics at home, when we forgot the food and had to wait on, oh! so long! May we

give a picnic this week, Miss Crump and self? We could have quite a nice party."

"But I am going away, Miss Toney," said the General; "you must wait till I return."

"Aunt Dove, you wouldn't have liked our picnic that day, there were so many blacks staring at us. One of them looked so odd because she was in mourning for her husband."

"Very wasteful of them to wear crape," said Lady Dove. "I always refuse to give the poor people crape. It is ridiculous of them to wear expensive material."

"Then do give them feathers, Aunt Dove, because the blacks, you know, don't wear *much*; but when they lose their husbands they stuff their hair with feathers. That's instead of crape. Perhaps your Kanakas would take to feathers if I explained it to them. It's cheaper."

"I'm glad that, having no wife, I need not prepare for that expense in my will," said the General, laughing.

"The men weren't kind to their wives at all. The poor women looked so thin. When we threw bits to the fowls, one of the poor gins snatched them up to eat them, as if she were downright starved."

"Antonia, I always thought you had been brought up among savages, but I hope you won't repeat these stories to *every one*."

"Why not, Aunt Dove? Pups said the whites had not behaved well to the aborigines, but on the Queen's birthday they get blankets given to them."

"It's very kind of the Queen," said Lady Do-

"If you have done your tea, Toney, I should wish you to go upstairs till I come to you to hear your catechism. I find, General, that girls always stumble over their duty to their neighbor."

"I wish I were a lag, Aunt Dove! Do you know, Pups always knew a lag when he met him."

"A lag! More heathen, Antonia?"

"Only an old-ticket-of-leave man."

"Dreadful! Pray go, Antonia."

When Toney and Miss Crump had disappeared, Lady Dove turned toward the General and sadly shook her head.

"You see, dear General, that the girl has been brought up among the worst society. What can be expected of her?"

"What, indeed!" said the General, rising to go. "I must really help you, Lady Dove, in settling this puzzling question."

Toney herself had skipped upstairs in the highest spirits, while poor Miss Crump followed more slowly and more wearily. She had spent her afternoon in reading Lady Dove to sleep.

"Dear Crumpet, now I can laugh! Trick, dear, come out and wag your tail for joy. Tomorrow we shall have this chair finished, and then our dresses. Oh, chum dear, we must make them quickly. I've been to see a friend this afternoon—an Australian friend—and I'm wild with delight."

"So I see, Toney." Miss Crump was very weary, Toney was almost too much for her.

"You didn't rest, after all! Too bad, but I'll tell

you what, you must leave off being a companion! It doesn't suit you at all, dear Crumpet."

"Oh, have I complained? It's only sometimes that I feel the weariness and the monotony as almost unbearable. The monotony, Toney, is worse than the work."

"Well, you must leave it all and I'll take your place. It will be odd. Come when you're called, do as you're bid, shut the door after you, and you'll never be chid."

Toney seized Trick and danced round the room. Suddenly she paused.

"I must calm myself and see the General. Why, there he is walking on the terrace! Oh, Trick! come along, but don't lift up your voice."

Toney tucked up Miss Crump in the Bush shawl, gave her a book and then slid down the banisters at an alarming speed, landing herself with a thud on the marble hall. Her duty to her neighbor went suddenly out of her head. Trick looked very sad that he could not follow his mistress' example, but had to come down the stairs like an ordinary mortal.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PAVING THE WAY.

"GENERAL STONE, I want to speak to you in private. I have so much to tell you, I know you will be so very, very glad about it."

The General started. He had been deep in thought, and had not heard Toney's step.

"What shall I be glad about, Toney?" The girl seemed to him like a new type of humanity, there was nothing sordid about her words or her thoughts.

"Don't you guess? Well, I'll tell you. It's just the beautifulest romance which you could imagine. At least, I suppose you don't imagine them now, you are too old; but when you were young you must have been in love, I suppose."

"You think everybody is in love when they are young?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose so. I am not old enough yet, but we had such romances out there. I could tell you heaps, but this one is my very, very own."

"Your own, Toney?"

"Yes, my very, very own. I've planned it beautifully, just like planning a campaign, you know. It's about Miss Crump. Aren't you pleased?"

Not for the world would the General have owned

to Toney that he did not care two straws for Miss Crump's romance.

"Of course," he said smiling.

"Do walk faster, Trick is staring at your heels! Yes, I've been and seen him, and he has no gin and no pickaninnies. He's quite, quite free, and very much in love, I'm sure."

"What, the missionary!"

"Yes, and you and I must find him a living. I am going to prepare Crumpet for all this. How would you do it, suppose you had to break such news to a friend of yours?"

"Well, I don't know; but suppose they don't like each other?"

"Oh! they must, you know, both look so faithful. I'm sure that's safe, but they can't live on air. Will you find a living for him? Of course a bishopric would be better, but bishops' wives have to be worldly; and Crumpet couldn't be that, could she?"

Toney laughed so much at the idea that Trick began barking for the sake of good-fellowship.

"My dear Toney, I have no livings to give away, I assure you. Besides——"

"Oh, but you have friends, I know. Aunt Dove said that you were a very influential man, and that it was very necessary to keep in with you; so of course it means that you can get livings. Besides, he's just as saintly as you like, and he's worked fifteen years among the Kanakas, and Crumpet has worked fifteen years with Aunt Dove! You see, they are even."

"My dear child, you'll be the death of me! What ridiculous notions. However, we'll see what can be done about a living. That is easier to get than money to live with in it. The Church is going to——"

"Pups said early Christians managed better than we do—they shared things. Have you tried your whistle?"

"No, not yet. I'm waiting for a night alarm in town."

"It might bring Aunt Dove out if you tried it here. I forgot that."

"What about your duty to your neighbor, Toney?" said the General. "You seem to be telling me mine!"

"Am I? Oh, no, you do your duty, I'm sure, always. I must go back, then. I'd forgotten the catechism, but I do know it. Pups used to hear me say it when I was four years old."

"Your father was a wonderful man, Toney, but not very worldly wise."

"No, not at all worldly wise, but still he was very knowing. Now, he would have told me how to break this news to Crumpet. You know about the lover, and you won't. Do you think she'll faint? I do hope not."

"I hope not, wait till I'm gone to-morrow, Toney. You would call me up, I fear, if there was no one else at hand."

"Uncle Dove would be more useful, because I think Aunt Dove used to faint when she wanted something. Not really, you know, only make be-

lieve; but make-believes are often more troublesome to cure."

"Well, I wish you well through it, Toney. Don't forget about your whistles if you want spare cash."

"I don't want any yet till Crumpet gets married. We must rig her up. I rather fancy Aunt Dove won't like parting with her at all. She is a very useful person."

"I suppose she is, but Lady Dove would easily find another companion."

"Oh, I shall apply when Miss Crump goes, and then I shan't cost Aunt Dove so much. I'm learning everything. I'll train Trick to wake me early, and the servants are really very nice. By the way, you won't forget to tip Jim, will you to-morrow? I'm going to save his money for him. Good-by for the present. You will see about the living, or shall I ask Mr. Waycott? Do you know that this Mr. Faber saved Mr. Waycott's life when he was young, and he'll do all he can when he knows he has come home."

"Oh, Waycott knows him, does he? Well, that sounds more hopeful."

"Indeed, I've told you everything exactly, General Stone. Pups said I was a good judge of people. He thought Trick and I had about the same amount of instinct. Oh, I've forgotten my duty to my neighbor again. Can you say it?"

"No, I'm sure I can't. Ah! there is Sir Evas and my brother."

But Toney disappeared like lightning. She was just a little doubtful about the General's great joy at her news, but she hoped that he would come round

when he fully understood the wonderful romance of Miss Crump's and Mr. Faber's lives.

Lady Dove, suddenly looking out of the window and thinking the evening very delightful, for she required fresh air after her afternoon's drowsiness, forgot Toney's catechism, and strolled out to join her husband in the garden, through which forgetfulness Toney had time to do what she wanted.

When she got back to the sitting-room she found Miss Crump fast asleep in the still unfinished arm-chair. The girl sat down very quietly on a low stool opposite to the companion, then she put Trick on his honor not to bark; after this, resting her chin in her palms, she earnestly contemplated her sleeping friend.

As she slept, Miss Crump's strained expression seemed to disappear. The face assumed a rounder look, and a faint ray of her first youth was visible. After all, Miss Crump was only thirty-five, and had her life been other than it was she might still have been called a young woman. The hands were small and shapely, but thin and worn, while the blue veins in them looked like the veins of a transparent leaf.

Toney indulged in a good think. She knew that without her this wedding would, most likely, never take place; but she also fancied that Aunt Dove, to save money, would accept her in Miss Crump's place. The girl mentally put herself in this situation, and it was by no means a pleasant picture which she imagined. But she faced it bravely. To make Miss Crump happy meant that she must walk in the companion's tight shoes; it meant, too, becoming a still

more strictly guarded prisoner than she was at present, but Toney had never really thought first of herself, and though it was a struggle she resolutely fought it out.

“Pups did such heaps of disagreeable things for other people, of course I must do the same. Perhaps Crumpet will come and see me sometimes, or I might get a week out if Uncle Evas really turned his hand to helping. Oh! I’m so strong, it won’t be really so bad for me, and Aunt Dove will save by it. Then I’ve got Trick, and poor Crumpet had nobody. Of course I can do it. Now, I think I’ll wake her up and break the news to her.”

Toney seized Trick—he was very tired of being good—and held him up close to the sleeping Miss Crump’s face.

“Kiss her, dear; your nose is so cold that it must wake her. It wakes me, you know, Trick, and that’s why you do it.”

It did wake Miss Crump, who started up as if she had heard the warning bell.

“Was it for me, Toney?” she said, sitting bolt upright.

“No, it was not the bell, only Trick’s nose. I believe Aunt Dove’s forgotten all about my duty to my neighbor. Ten to one she’s gone out, so lie still, Crumpet dear, and let’s have a talk.”

Miss Crump sat up and smiled. She had been dreaming of old days, and the young look was still in her face.

“What’s the use of talking of old days? And yet it is pleasant. Before you came, Toney, I had no one

to talk to. It seems so strange, the difference you have made to my happiness."

"Well, it would be stranger if— Chum, dear, I've been to Winchley this afternoon!"

"Oh, no, you went to church."

"I did both; and wasn't it funny? I met Mrs. Todd driving her little cart, so she gave me a lift."

"I don't know this Mrs. Todd very well. I've seen her, but why did you want to go to Winchley this afternoon?"

"Well, it made a sort of change, didn't it? I feel sometimes here as if I must run somewhere just to prevent stiffening up all over. Mrs. Todd is a motherly sort of body and asked me in. She's got a lodger."

"Has she? There are nice rooms over the shop."

"Yes, and I went up just to see what they were like."

"Oh, Toney! if Lady Dove knew!—and on a Sunday, too! I ought to have gone with you, but I couldn't find you!"

Toney laughed immoderately.

"I should think not! Didn't I run just about? Why, Pups said he never knew such a runner as I was. It's one of my gifts, but I shall lose it, I know I shall."

"Who was the lodger; did you see her?"

"Why, yes, I went to see her—him, I mean. He was a friend of a friend of mine in Australia, and, you know, we always neighbor out there. It's a creed with us; we try to make newcomers feel at home."

“Oh, dear Toney! how nice to talk of your home! Was he a pleasant gentleman?”

“Well, he didn't just know my home, you see, but he knew a friend of mine, a particular friend—in fact, a chum of mine.”

“A chum! You have a good many.”

“Well, a goodish few, but only one particular chum just now.”

Toney was trying to break the news very gently.

Miss Crump blushed a little.

“Oh, it wasn't a friend of mine, Toney; but do you mean that he knew— Oh! I ought not to have told you.”

Toney laughed again and nodded her head.

“Yes, he knew him. He liked him awfully and told me about him.”

Miss Crump blushed scarlet and her white hands trembled a little.

“Toney, did he happen to say if he was well and if his wife——”

“He did say something about not being very well, but there's no gin and no pickaninnies. He's all alone—in fact, chum dear, it's no use breaking it gently any more, he's he, and he's invalided home, and he's longing to see you, and you must be longing to see him.” Toney had uttered all these last sentences as fast as her tongue could go.

“You are make-believing, Toney,” said Miss Crump, bending forward a little. “I know it's my fault for telling you my fancies; but please don't, dear, it was all real to me.”

At that moment, Toney began to understand the

depth of a lonely soul. She felt a lump in her throat, and the future years of Aunt Dove's companionship appeared to her as nothing if they could gain freedom for this sad soul.

"I'm speaking all the truth, every bit of it, chum, dear. He's here, and he's longing to see you. I told him to call upon us."

"Oh, no, no, you should not have done that. Besides—Lady Dove couldn't spare me, and—and I dare say, Henry is no richer than he was. He was not one to make money, he never was. Oh, no, no!"

Miss Crump suddenly rose and paced the little room, which since Toney's arrival looked homelike.

After a few minutes Miss Crump became calmer; indeed, when she sat down again she looked much as usual, only her hands still trembled as she took up a book. Toney was a little disappointed to see her so calm again.

"Crumpet, you do believe me, don't you?"

"Perhaps—I don't know, I must not excite myself. I gave all that up long ago. I can't do my work if—if I think of things."

Toney found out then that people cannot at once be happy when they have been too long accustomed to sorrow.

But Toney's time for sorrow had not yet come, she could not be unhappy for long; and when the dinner bell rang she jumped up, for she knew that Miss Crump would prefer being left alone to have a grand think about the news.

"Aunt Dove, you never came to hear my catechism," said Toney cheerfully, when the soup was

being taken round. "Perhaps you thought I didn't know it, but I do, at least I did know it out there, but here one seems to forget all the old things. Your neighbors are different, somehow."

"I was engaged," said Lady Dove. "I shall hear it another time. Must you really leave us to-morrow, dear General? We shall miss you sadly."

"No one is very much missed," was the General's answer.

"I can tell you all the news in a letter," said Toney encouragingly. "I must learn to write notes. There's a book on Aunt Dove's table which tells you how to begin to all the grand people."

"I prefer your own unassisted genius, Toney," he answered, smiling.

"Do you? Well, that is nice of you!"

That night, Toney lay awake for five minutes, scheming how she was to make everything come right for Miss Crump, then happy, dreamless sleep blotted out all her earthly puzzles.

The time-table began again the next morning, but before Toney was expected to appear the armchair had been covered, and Toney placed it in the very middle of the room, so that its full glory might be seen. It was a very creditable piece of work, and the girl was proud of it, because, thought she, Crumpet would look so much prettier in a becoming armchair when *he* came to ask the important question. Would he come or had she made her journey in vain? How would they meet? These questions were worked into the brilliant chintz and finished off by a dance round the chair with Trick. The noise brought in Sir Evas,

who thought the house was on fire, or that some misfortune had overtaken that marvellous Toney.

"Toney! It's only you! Good gracious! Your aunt will be coming down soon. This isn't in your time-table, is it?" and he laughed.

"No, but it's the birthday of the chintz cover. Look, Uncle Dove! Do you think—just try to imagine what I tell you—do you think this armchair would be the right place for your young woman, if you wanted to pop the question?"

"Toney! I don't want to do that; you know I'm married."

"But if you weren't married, and if you were dreadfully in love, do you think if she sat in that chair in the middle of the room that you would at once fall on your knees—I'll put a soft mat for you."

"My dear Toney! Gentlemen don't fall on their knees, they have too much regard for their clothes."

"Oh, dear, then whatever do they do, Uncle Dove? Do be serious, please; it's most important."

"Important for whom?"

"For Crumpet! I want her to have an offer just here, but you won't tell, will you? It's a deep secret, only I don't like to do anything underhand, and you are master here."

"Am I? Well, but I can't supply Miss Crump with a lover. It isn't possible. You told me Jim was already engaged two deep."

"Jim! Oh, uncle! Why, Crumpet is a lady; she has a very choice mind, I'm sure, and *he* is quite a saint, something like King Arthur."

"Do you mean to say that that meek Miss Crump

has found a lover? Well, I should not have given her credit for it."

"Uncle Dove, you mustn't talk like that. It's a romance, a beautiful romance. They met as children and parted because they were too poor to marry."

"My dear Toney, you ought to be a novelist."

"It's earnest, Uncle Dove. But poverty is nothing when people love each other, and I wish they could have the wonderful basket of Gwyddneu Garanhir."

"Eh?"

"It's in that old book of Pups I told you about. If you put food in that basket, enough for one man, when you opened it again you found enough for a hundred."

"Vastly convenient!"

"There was the horn, too, and whatever wine you wanted to drink you immediately found in it; and there was a chess board, where the pieces were of gold and silver and played of themselves. Oh, and Arthur's cloak! Whoever had it on could see everything and no one could see him."

"That might be a useful covering for you, Toney. And so Miss Crump has picked up a King Arthur! That really beats me."

"Uncle, you'll give her a fine wedding present, won't you? She has served you for fifteen years, you know!"

"Me? Anyhow, Toney, I'll let you choose it."

"Oh, you are good! That beautiful red dress might come in useful for the wedding— There's the prayer bell, and we must be down in time. And"

Uncle Dove, you are *quite* sure this chair looks suitable for—you know?"

"Quite sure; I only wish, Toney, that——"

"Please don't laugh; I'm in real, real earnest. Good-by." This farewell was given on the top of the balustrade, and to Sir Evas' great surprise, he saw his poor relation sliding down the rest of the way at an alarming speed.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE UNEXPECTED.

"As I'm going past the Vicarage, Lady Dove, may I take Miss Antonia there? My brother prefers walking, and you will at least know she is safely housed for the morning." So spake the General, and Lady Dove was profuse in her thanks.

"But you start rather early, dear General. Still it will release Miss Crump, who is very busy to-day."

Toney was, accordingly, informed of the plan, and she was not at all sorry, for she wanted to remind the General about the living. Men promised so easily but forgot so soon. That was Toney's verdict of the stronger sex. When the dogcart came round Toney was quickly in her place.

"I'll drive, Jim," she said. "I've some special last words with the General. He's not nervous now."

Happily for Toney, Lady Dove had a slight cold and did not come to the front door to interfere with Toney's orders.

"You are not frightened now, are you, General Stone? Pups said he had taught me to ride, to speak the truth, and to shoot, and he hoped the future would do all the rest for me."

The General laughed.

"Your father was a good master evidently, but he did not remember that ordinary young ladies are not taught these last two accomplishments. As we have a good deal of spare time, I want to drive first to your missionary's lodgings, Toney."

"Do you?" said Toney opening her eyes. "You really mean it? I thought you had forgotten. I should like you to see him, just to notice what a beautiful face he has. General Stone, please stoop down, I want to tell you something which will please you very much. I've told Miss Crump, and she did not faint."

"Ah! and so you have broken the ice?"

"Yes, but she looks ill this morning; she has not slept at all I fear. I can't make up my mind about their meeting. I thought that coming to-day from Waycott Hall, we might go home by Winchley, but then there must be a chaperon, I think. At least, at home we didn't bother about such things, but here it's different."

"They are sure to meet in time, Toney, without your intervention."

"I don't know. Crumpet hardly ever goes out alone. She gets no real exercise, that's why she is so pale and nervous, but she really is improving."

"Well, Toney, what is your idea about your own future?"

"I have quite decided. I must take Crumpet's place. It will save Aunt Dove twenty pounds a year. She likes saving, and then I really know what she wants. If I get up early and do gymnastics, I think I can bear it. Then I can do all kinds of

things which Crumpet can't do to keep up my stamina. Yes, that's quite settled."

"I don't think you will like it."

"No, I shan't like it, but you see poor relations aren't supposed to have likes and dislikes. Crumpet hasn't any."

"You had better let her go on where she is. She is accustomed to it by this time."

Toney laughed heartily.

"Accustomed to it! That's just the reason she ought to go. Oh, I can make myself happy anywhere really! At least I hope so. Pups wouldn't ever let me cry except for something really sad; he hated female tears. He said you never saw a really great person indulge in tears."

"Bess is going rather fast, don't you think?"

"She's all right. Look, here we are! How shall you begin? You must send up your card and say you are a friend of mine."

Bess pulled up before the family draper's door and Toney saw the General alight. Jim went to the horse's head and Toney began a "think."

It did not seem very long before the General came back again and they drove on to the station.

"Well," said Toney eagerly. "Isn't he like King Arthur?"

"King Arthur wasn't a clergyman, was he? But certainly Mr. Faber looks a nice sort of fellow."

"And wasn't he delighted at the interest you took in him?"

"I said it was as your friend, Toney, that I wished to speak to him."

"Oh, well, I thought you were really interested yourself." Toney was a little disappointed with the General.

"Yes, certainly I am. We must see what can be done. I'll write to Waycott. He remembers him well."

"And you won't be too long, will you? The course of true love must be made to flow quickly, besides——"

"Besides what? The world is not quite so quickly moved as you imagine."

"Well, you see, I might repent about the situation."

"Here we are, Toney, and you had better drive back at once to the Vicarage. I hope you will pay as much attention as you can to Mr. Hales' widson."

"I must make haste to learn all I can. I can't go on with any studies when I've taken Crumpet's place."

"Indeed you can't! Good-by, Toney. When I next come, or if I next come——"

"Why if?"

"I may die suddenly. The doctors say that my heart complaint may terminate without previous warning."

"Well, that's the happiest death possible, Pups said; but if doctors pull long faces, you are sure to live! If you're ill, I'll come and nurse you. Do let me. I can nurse people first rate."

"Thank you, but I should never know if you were going out of the door or out of the window. Good-by, child! God bless you."

"Good-by. Thank you for being so good about him. Oh! General Stone, have you got it safe?"

"Yes, here it is," and the old man drew out the whistle from his pocket.

The General slipped something into Jim's hand, and in a few moments Toney was driving fast away.

"Jim," said Toney, "will you send word to Miss Crump that I shall be ready for her at twelve o'clock, and that if she likes to have the old pony, you'll saddle it for her? You must ask Sir Evas if he minds, but he won't! Mind the saddle is safe, because she drags it a good deal. Miss Crump has to learn to ride and drive in case she requires it soon."

"Yes, miss," said Jim. To him Toney seemed like an empress. A young lady who could ride and drive and even groom a horse was a unit of the female sex quite superior to her race. When they stopped at the Vicarage gate, Toney got down.

"If you please, miss, here it is!" said Jim very shyly.

He drew out a golden sovereign from his waistcoat pocket.

"Oh, Jim! A whole sovereign. Well, this will be a good beginning."

"Do you think, Miss, that it was a mistake for a shilling?"

"Oh, dear! I don't know. Anyhow I'll take it and ask him, but he is the very nicest General that can be found. He bought a whistle I made him for five shillings, and altogether it is an honor to know him."

Jim assented; but time was up and Toney ran into

the Vicarage study, to find Silvia waiting for her, looking resigned and severe.

When Miss Crump called for her, Toney was putting on her hat, while the Vicar was explaining one of Horace's odes to her.

"I must go, now. Miss Crump must not be kept waiting. I want to know if you'll be so very kind, Mr. Hales, as to call on a brother clergyman? It is Mr. Faber, a returned missionary. He's done a lot of good among the Kanakas, but it's so hot out in the sugar-cane plantations that it ruins an English constitution. And, let me see, you'll be very nice to him, won't you, as he is a particular friend of mine, or, at least, he's going to be."

"I had heard that Mr. Faber was at the Todds' but I am sorry to say that I put off calling. Thank you for reminding me," said the Vicar.

Toney went off to join Miss Crump, hoping she had done her best for the advancement of the romance.

For a while the two walked on in silence, then Miss Crump broke the quietude.

"I think, Toney, that I would rather you did not mention Mr. Faber again to me. I've made up my mind to—to—not to see him."

"Not to see him!" Toney stopped from sheer astonishment.

"Yes, I looked in the glass this morning as I was dressing, and I could see that I am much changed. I have no youth left, and he—well, a man does not age so soon as a woman."

"Oh, Crumpet! you're not old one bit. It would

be cruel of you to disappoint him. I'm sure he cares very much for you, because he looked so odd when he mentioned you. Yes, he loves you very, very much."

Miss Crump walked very quickly and turned her head away as she answered:

"No, no, Toney dear, I don't want to see him. I would rather not. It is all over long ago. It was the best thing I had, that recollection of our last meeting. No, he will find many others who will be glad——"

"Oh, chum!" answered Toney. This was not by way of remonstrance, but because just in front of her she saw Mr. Faber himself coming toward them. They were nearing the gates of the park of Waycott Hall; perhaps he had been calling there, but anyhow they must meet him. Toney saw that they were near to a field gate, so she suddenly added:

"I see some special flowers that I want particularly. Do wait for me here, please," then she darted away and climbing over a gate with extraordinary rapidity she disappeared. Miss Crump had not noticed the newcomer. She was turning her back to him, and only looking despairingly at the gate over which Toney had bounded. They should be late for luncheon, she thought, and what would be said of them? Perhaps they should have to enter the dining-room when all the ladies were assembled. At that moment Miss Crump decided that there was certainly a great deal to be said against Toney's agility.

She turned round suddenly and a little impatiently, and found herself face to face with her old lover.

"Anne," he said, holding out his hand, "my dearest Anne."

Anne Crump blushed crimson, but she felt that she must be brave and firm for Henry's sake. How pale he looked, and yet how handsome! He seemed to have lost the look of indecision and youth which she remembered in old days, so that now, in fact, he seemed to be quite above her, the poor companion. He was fit to associate with the best in the land. She tried to be quite calm and unconcerned.

"How do you do, Mr. Faber? I am sorry you have been ill."

He colored a little, for he had hoped to find a warm welcome from his "dearest Anne." He looked at her a moment and saw that she looked older and paler; but all these years he had idealized her, and a good man's ideal never really changes. He would not let go of her hand as he answered sadly:

"Must we be strangers? I meant not to put myself in your way, but—but that young lady encouraged all my hopes. We may have been wrong, I see it now, never to have corresponded; but we acted for the best. Mr. Waycott has received me very kindly. I told him I should look for work as soon as I was strong enough, but I kept our secret." Miss Crump felt that she could not long remain cold.

"Henry, indeed there is no secret. You know I am penniless and that you are not rich. You must look for a wife with money. Leave me as I am. I shall be glad, very glad, to hear that you are happy."

"I can never be happy with another, Anne, dear, if you will not have me. When I went to Australia

I said, 'I will make a home for her and then I will write,' but I could not learn to please my congregation, and the poor Kanakas wanted me. I have lived among them, only earning my daily bread, so I have come back as poor as I went; but there must be some work here for me. Anne, will you not give me hope, at least, that if I find it you will share it with me?"

"It isn't true," said Miss Crump half to herself as the tears ran down her pale cheeks. Happiness, she thought, was not for her. She had never really expected it.

"But it is true. It was my fault that you are not willing. I ought to have written, but I fancied some other, a better and richer man, would find out your worth."

No one at Aldersfield House had ever tried to find out Miss Crump's worth, so this speech made her smile. It was the old sweet smile which Henry Faber remembered, only now it was also wearily patient.

"Henry, I ought not—" but her fingers closed over his.

There was nobody to be seen in the road, so he held the small hand to his lips.

"To think we so nearly missed this happiness," he said, with a sigh. "We can wait now, it will not matter."

"But Lady Dove will never——"

"What has she to do with it?" said Henry quickly.

"You don't know her. Henry, it must not be.

What have I done? She will call me ungrateful." But Henry laughed.

"My dearest, where can I see you again? I have so much to say. Where are you going now?"

He had just drawn the blushing, trembling Anne's arm into his own, when there was a strange sound close by, and Toney's loud exclamation preceded her vaulting body over the gate.

"Gracious stars! Chum dear, I couldn't help hearing just the last sentence; but—but we *must* go on! Oh, Mr. Faber, have you persuaded her? You do look so very jolly, both of you. It's just quite right, isn't it? I'm awfully sorry to come back, but what could I do? There isn't a flower left in the field. There, Chum dear, take them!"

"Lady Dove's niece!" said the missionary, laughing.

"Oh, Toney, it's all your doing, and I'm very, very happy," said Miss Crump, and then she cried softly as she shyly turned her head away.

"I can't go to lunch, I can't," she added in a moment, laughing as she spoke.

"Of course not," said Toney. "Do walk back to Mrs. Todds', and I'll come and fetch you. I don't mind going alone at all. You know Mr. Waycott is so neighborly; but I'm so very glad, only he can't go on his knees here," she added, nodding toward Mr. Faber, and before Miss Crump was aware of it, Toney had seized her round the waist and was waltzing across the road with her.

"Everybody, I am sure, is delighted and I shall

choose your wedding present." After this Toney took to running hard and was soon out of sight.

How Miss Crump ever found the courage to walk down the road side by side with a man is still a matter of wonder to those who know her. She could not yet realize much, except that something wonderful had happened to her, and that she was doing something of which Lady Dove would much disapprove. She could not be very demonstrative even now, but when no one was in sight Mr. Faber put her hand in his arm and she felt that she was safe. The clouds began slowly rolling off the gray horizon and at evening-time there was light. Very gradually she began to tell Henry about Toney; she also heard his account of the girl's visit, and all that she had said and done. They both agreed that Toney had brought about all this happiness, forgetting for the moment that at present their union was as far off as ever, and that Lady Dove was as powerful as she had been the day before. But Love had come and he bandaged their eyes, and they saw only beautiful visions, such as Toney so fully believed in.

"Why weren't we engaged all these years?" said Anne, with a little sigh of deep regret.

The reason was because both had been self-denying, and both had thought of the other; but their mistakes had purified the gold, and now all that was left was ready for the impress of the perfect design to be drawn by the Master's hand.

But Toney, as she ran up to Waycott Hall, having no past regrets to find place for, had unalloyed happiness.

CHAPTER XX.

LATE FOR LUNCHEON.

"REALLY, Lewis, I do think this extraordinary girl and Lady Dove's companion might manage to be in time when you are good-natured enough to ask them to lunch," said Miss Honoria, sitting down in the pretty dining-room of Waycott Hall. "I consider it very rude of them."

"You should not have asked them, Lewis," said Mrs. Hamilton softly.

"What are we to do with them after lunch?" said Jeanie.

"Silvia Hales says she quite dreads Antonia's arrival in the morning," added Maud.

The two empty seats certainly looked reproachfully at Lewis Waycott, but he found an excuse for Toney.

"I expect Lady Dove interfered and prevented their coming."

"I am truly sorry for her," said Mrs. Hamilton. "I don't think she is a very sympathetic person, but she must be extremely annoyed by such a very undisciplined girl. She is nearly seventeen, too, I hear. She ought to be sensible by this time."

"Mrs. Hales likes her, so she told me," said Lewis, "and she is a sight on horseback. She has the best seat I ever saw for a woman."

"That isn't exactly a feminine accomplishment," said Miss Honoria.

There was the sound of hasty steps, and when the footman flung open the door, Toney ran in quite out of breath.

"I'm so sorry, so very sorry for being late, but it was quite an accident, and I am afraid Miss Crump won't come at all. It really is provoking—just her first invitation too!"

"How do you do, Miss Whitburn?" said Miss Waycott, coming forward rather stiffly.

"Oh, thank you, please don't get up for me; I'm quite well; I'm never ill. Mr. Waycott, will you forgive me?"

Toney's chair was placed next to that of the squire, and he smiled his forgiveness as he shook hands with her.

"I am sure your reason is excellent; besides no one minds being late for a luncheon party."

The other ladies gave Toney stiff bows, which made her sink into her chair feeling rather shy, or rather experiencing that sensation which answered to the word "*shy*" in Toney's nature.

"Miss Crump is engaged, that is why she can't come," said Toney, suddenly recovering her high spirits and laughing happily.

"I am very sorry," said Lewis.

"No, you mustn't be sorry, but glad, of course. Isn't it a great piece of news? I knew you would be delighted."

"She is generally a good deal engaged, isn't she?" said Miss Honoria, still rather stiffly; but Toney

radiant face was certainly a pleasant picture to look upon.

"Oh, no, indeed she isn't! This is the very first time. Quite by chance they met in the road, and then I knew it was coming! I felt quite puzzled."

"Good gracious! Miss Whitburn means that Miss Crump is matrimonially engaged," exclaimed Lewis. "No wonder you were late if this happened on the road."

"There," said Toney, relieved. "I thought you would understand and see how difficult it was to help it. I meant them to—to—you know—in our sitting-room, but this was an accident."

Lewis was convulsed with laughter, only Mrs. Hamilton kept her countenance and looked rather shocked.

"What did you do, Miss Whitburn? I suppose you did not assist?"

"No, I jumped over a gate and went to the end of the field; then thinking of your luncheon, I came back again."

"I am sure we wish her joy," said Miss Honoria. "I now quite understand your delay."

"And who is the gentleman?" said Lewis, trying not to laugh.

"It's Mr. Faber. He has been here, I think; at least, we saw him coming out of this gate."

"Henry Faber!" Lewis looked really pleased. He saw by Toney's face that she was delighted, and he was ready to share her enthusiasm.

"You said, Lewis, that he has no hope of getting

a living," said Miss Honoria. "I fear it means a long waiting-time for them."

"She mustn't wait any longer, because, you see, Miss Crump has already waited fifteen years! She was just wearing herself out. Oh, I am so much excited about it!"

"I wish you could do something for him," said Miss Honoria. "He never would accept any favors. Poor fellow!"

"I have unfortunately no living to give away. This morning he said that most likely he should offer his services to a colonial bishop."

"They mustn't go away," said Toney, "because I shall want to go and see them. Do you know, Mr. Waycott, that I am going to succeed to Miss Crump's situation?"

Maud giggled audibly.

"You are hardly old enough," said Miss Honoria, smiling.

"I have been learning the duties, and it is quite easy. You must read a good deal, and sit still a good deal, and talk very little, and arrange the flowers, and scold the servants, and——"

"And exercise the horses in the park?" said Lewis, and Toney and he laughed together.

"Well, at home, you know, everybody tears along the road on horseback or in buggies, as if they couldn't waste a minute. Everything goes very slowly here and everybody is slow."

"Did you keep house in Australia?" asked Maud.

"Yes, I did, when we had a house to keep. Our humpy was just a small shed in the Bush, and the

difficulty was getting in and out. I had to make the butter in a washhand basin there."

Mrs. Hamilton groaned in a ladylike manner; the others laughed.

"How dreadful!" said the widow.

"No, it was not bad at all. You had to make shift."

When Miss Honoria led the way into the drawing-room Toney looked rather miserable. She could not think what to say to the young ladies, and she was besides all eagerness to get home and to hear about Miss Crump's walk. It would take her some time to go round by Winchley, so she knew that she must not stay very long. Besides, she read disapprobation of herself in Mrs. Hamilton's stiff outline, and Toney wondered why it was that English young ladies did not like her. Even Silvia, whom Toney daily beheld with admiration, would not be friendly. What could it be? From this serious puzzle Lewis Waycott came to deliver her by proposing a game of tennis. Toney brightened up, and the two young ladies, after a few demurs, went to fetch their racquets.

"Did you play in Australia?" said Maud.

"Yes, Pups and I played for exercise, but I never could beat him."

Maud looked rather shocked at this point; but when Toney became her partner her opinion changed. Lewis and Jeanie found that they had to work hard to keep their heads above water. The Squire had thought himself a good player, but Toney was evidently able to cope with any one. It was a beautiful sight to see her movements, and the two elder ladies,

who came to look on, gradually became interested in the game.

"You ought to be a champion player, Miss Whitburn," said Lewis, when Toney had won the set in spite of Maud's failures. "You never told us that you played very well. We must have many games this summer."

Toney was not at all vain and hardly noticed the compliment.

"At home people play a good deal, but lately Pups only let me play very occasionally. He said too much of it was waste of time, but he was very particular that one should play well."

The Misses Hamilton were secretly jealous of Toney, but comforted themselves with the knowledge that she did not know one note of music from another.

They said that tennis was only a game, and that Lewis looked as if he had never seen a good lady player, whereas Miss Hobbs was very superior to this girl—at least, she was always dressed beautifully.

"I must go, please," said Toney, starting up. "It has been real nice, and I feel quite stretched."

"Ahem!" said Mrs. Hamilton softly.

"You must teach Sir Evas," remarked Miss Honoria.

"Oh, no! You see, I mustn't get fond of playing here, because I'm sure a companion will never have time to play. I am doing all my exercise beforehand," and Toney's merry laughter won Miss Honoria's heart.

"My dear child, you cannot be any one's companion. You are too—too——"

"But, indeed, you don't know what I can do. There, good-by, I must go. I wonder if Miss Crump has said all she wants to say to her young man! Aunt Dove thinks she is here. Gracious stars, we shall have to confess."

"Ahem!" said Mrs. Hamilton again. "Jeanie, dear, wish Miss Whitburn good-by, and get ready to go out in the carriage with me."

The Misses Hamilton disappeared and Lewis came back, bringing a terrier with him.

"I will take you to the gate, Miss Whitburn. By the way, I meant Trick to come."

"Did you? That *was* kind. I'll tell him, but I thought it was better not because of your ladies, and also I really was afraid about Mr. Faber's heels. I had thought we *might* meet him coming back, and it would be so difficult to make love if Trick was gnawing your heels. Now, wouldn't it, Mr. Waycott?"

"It might help one to get it over quickly," said Lewis, gravely.

"You are like General Stone. He makes a little fun over it, just because Miss Crump isn't very, very young and beautiful."

"How is her riding getting on?" asked Lewis. Both laughed at the remembrance of the memorable ride.

"She would get on if I could teach her more, but life here is all very, very difficult."

Miss Honoria accompanied Lewis and Toney.

"You must come here oftener," she said kindly.

"Nō," said Toney, "the Miss Hamiltons wouldn't

like it. They think I am dreadful. I can see it in their faces."

It was so much the truth that Miss Honoria, being of a very truthful disposition, did not know what to say, and Lewis filled up the gap.

"They have never seen any one like you, that's all."

Toney looked herself well over.

"But what is there about me to surprise them? I've got two arms and two legs, and I speak like other people."

Miss Honoria laughed heartily.

"Well, not quite. You are rather more straightforward than most people; you say what you think."

"But what else should one say?" said Toney. "I couldn't think one thing and say another."

"That's what we generally do in society," said Lewis.

Toney shook her head sadly.

"I see; well, I'm not fit for English life. I'm all wrong. Good-by, I must run."

Toney meant this literally, and much to Miss Honoria's surprise the lithe figure flashed off, looking like a bit of blue cloud chased away by an invisible wind. Lewis turned back with his aunt.

"Well, Aunt Honor, isn't she a delightful specimen of unspoilt nature? But her physical development is splendid. She does everything so easily, and you should see her on horseback!"

"She is a very simple girl; yes, there is something very attractive about her. But, Lewis, she can't become that dreadful woman's companion! It is quite impossible."

"I should be rather sorry for Lady Dove," said Lewis laughing, "but she really means it. She means all she says, that's why we are quite unequal to coping with her."

"Impossible."

"I fear Lady Dove is very near. My father used to be at war with her, wasn't he?"

"Yes, oh, she is past hope; but Sir Evas ought to interfere."

"You are not Sir Evas, dear aunt."

"The girl is really penniless, I fear."

"Yes, her father must have been very strange."

"A constant Christian, I suppose; and that is strange."

"She has really done all this herself to bring about the happiness of this poor crushed woman."

"The girl is certainly remarkable, but her ways are not our ways. Your aunt, I see, is scandalized."

"Poor Toney! And Maud and Jeanie looked more than shocked. But her romance is the finest thing I have heard of for some time. I shall go and see Faber and see what I can do for him."

Later on in the afternoon Miss Crump became anxious at seeing no Toney arrive. She herself had been living in an earthly paradise, and Henry Faber had found his ideal even more wonderful than he had imagined it. To some Anne Crump might have seemed to be a dull, crushed, middle-aged woman, but to him she was an angel of goodness. As for Miss Whitburn, she appeared in the light of a wonderful ministering saint, sent to smooth the path of his dearest Anne.

A strong sense of duty made Anne start up at last and say that she must not stay any longer. If Toney came, she must be told to go on to Aldersfield House.

As it was, Miss Crump arrived when Lady Dove was just beginning to frown over her solitary tea. No one was with her, a neglect which she could not easily forgive.

"Miss Crump, I must say that it seems very strange that—" she began.

"Indeed, Lady Dove, I'm very sorry; I was waiting for Miss Antonia."

"Waiting for her! Were you not with her?"

"No, I—I—walked back to Winchley."

"And why, if you please? My orders were that you should go with her."

"Yes, but—but—I met a friend and walked home with him."

"With *him!* A man! Anne Crump, you have disgraced yourself."

"I—I—am engaged to him."

"You engaged! and since when, pray?"

"Since half-past twelve or quarter to one," murmured Miss Crump.

"And to whom, if you please? You have seen no one."

"Mr. Faber, a missionary, a friend of my girlhood."

"Faber! The bookseller's son? Ah, I heard of him! An invalid who has not got a penny in the world! After tea, Miss Crump, sit down and write to him to say that I shall not dream of allowing suc^h

a thing! You must be out of your senses! I believe it is Antonia's folly that has got into you."

"It was all her doing," said Miss Crump, looking up, and instead of trembling a smile parted her lips.

"Indeed! Anyhow, I shall not allow it. Utter foolishness! Antonia has filled up the measure of her iniquity. She must go. Some more tea, if you please, Miss Crump."

CHAPTER XXI.

A SUDDEN DECISION.

WHY had Toney basely deserted Miss Crump? She had certainly never meant to leave her stranded at Winchley, but on her way there something happened which altered all her plans.

As she was hurrying through the village she passed Mr. Thomas' cottage. At that moment Mary Thomas rushed out.

"Oh, Miss, won't you just come in and see Minnie? She's so fretful and she's calling out for you, and father's in the public house because he's come in early, and I'm so put about!"

"Why didn't you get little Mrs. Cross to come in?" asked Toney, who already knew all about Minnie's neighbors. "She's kind and motherly."

"Oh, but father says he won't have the neighbors in. They do talk so, and oh, Miss—" and then, having nearly reached the cottage, Mary threw her apron over her head and sobbed.

"Why didn't you call me in this morning? I thought Minnie had gone on early so I did not stop." Toney ran into the cottage without another thought but that of comforting Minnie, though she knew she could only stop a very few minutes because Miss Crump was expecting her.

In a corner of the dwelling-room little Minnie sat curled up in a big chair, moaning out, "Miss Toney, my Miss Toney."

Toney immediately gathered the child up in her arms and sat down to comfort her as she said:

"Draw the blind up, Mary. Gracious stars, how hot she is! I say, I don't believe she knows me. Why it's— She's ill. Go and fetch the doctor, or wait; there's a boy outside, tell him to fetch Dr. Latham, but don't go out yourself, Mary."

Toney was a colonial and a doctor's child. She knew at once what to do.

The two smaller children had not come from school, but were expected in every minute.

"When the others come, Mary," continued Toney, "tell them to run to the Vicarage and stop there till they hear more. They can tell Mrs. Hales I sent them. Don't you go near them. Suppose it's something catching?"

Mary, uncovering her face, did as she was bid, and now she began to take courage. She had been all day long alone with the fretful child, and she was very tired.

Toney examined Minnie again, holding the small burning hands very tenderly.

"She ought to be in bed, but I suppose the bed is cold. Get a bottle and put some boiling water in it, and then put a brick in the oven."

Toney gave directions as if she were in her own humpy, then she waited patiently, rocking the moaning child, wondering what Crumpet was doing and when the doctor would come.

In half an hour he made his appearance, and his surprise was great at seeing a young lady nursing Minnie; but Toney soon explained matters to him, having first sent Mary upstairs to see that Minnie's bed was warm.

"I say, Dr. Latham, I'm sure Minnie's very ill. I'm used to illness, so I knew as I was here, you see, I thought I had better stay because it may be infectious."

The doctor took the child in his arms.

"Ah! yes; well, I see. The child is very ill. I fear that it is a most malignant form of scarlet fever. I ought to have been called this morning."

"There's no mother here," said Toney, "and Mr. Thomas is going to the dogs. He wants a wife. I did tell Uncle Dove so, but he's very easy-going."

The doctor smiled for a moment, then he added seriously:

"Miss Whitburn, what is to be done? You must go and change your things and— The fear of infection is great, especially as you have held the child so long. If you do not catch it, you may give it to others."

"Well, I'm infected, I fancy! I must stay here. Pups was a doctor, and he was very particular about such things. Will you let me do what's right?"

"You must leave at once, of course, and be isolated for a time."

"But who can come here? There's no village nurse, I think, and I'm such a good nurse. No, I had better stay, only some one must explain it all to Aunt Dove. Pups said that this dangerous sort of scarlet

fever ought to be stamped out at once by isolation. If I must be isolated, I may as well stay here and be useful."

"Of course it's the best way, but my dear young lady——"

Toney laughed happily.

"Oh, I'm not a young lady, you know, only just a poor relation of Sir Evas Dove. It doesn't matter at all about me, and nobody will mind one bit. Aunt Dove won't, I'm sure; she doesn't like me."

The doctor was much puzzled, but after thinking a moment he suddenly looked up.

"Really, Miss Whitburn, it would be a very noble thing to stamp this out if any one could and would do it. I can keep Thomas away. Mary has been in it all day. I fear it is useless to separate her from her sister, but the others may be saved. This fever is frightfully infectious, but with strict precautions we may keep it from spreading farther."

"Oh, yes, isn't it interesting to fight disease? You can trust me really, that is if you will. I can cook and wash and do everything in this cottage. It will remind me of our humpy. But we mustn't do things by halves. I won't let anybody come in. It's real lucky this cottage stands alone."

Again the doctor was surprised at the girl's courage and decision.

"Are you in earnest?"

"Why not? I should love doing it for Pups' sake, you know. He was so happy when he conquered infection. It's lucky Minnie didn't go to school to-

day. I suppose you'll take every precaution, because, of course, doctors do say things sometimes."

"I shall be very careful. I'll send away my wife and child. Now, I shall walk home by the fields and change everything. Yes, if you will help me we will stamp it out. Once the village was ravaged by this fever."

A ray of real pleasure came into the doctor's face. He was a man who loved his profession, but at times he felt inclined to give up struggling with ignorance.

"Well, I shall go now. Can you keep everybody away?"

"Won't I? I'll barricade. Only as I can't write letters just now, you'll tell every one? Mr. Hales ought to know, because I do lessons with him. Oh, dear, I did want to know something."

"What is it? Can't I——"

"No, you can't. I want to know whether somebody who is just engaged—Miss Crump, you know her?—likes it."

The doctor laughed.

"I'm afraid I can't ask her that, but is it really so? I'm very glad for her sake. She has had a dull life."

"Gracious stars, I should think she has! But I want to know what Aunt Dove says of it! Oh, that would be funny! Good-by, Dr. Latham; you'll help me to do it thoroughly, won't you? Things can be put in the garden in a tub of carbolic water, and I'll draw the things up with a basket if necessary. It will be fun."

When the doctor was gone Toney explained th

case to Mary, who, feeling no more responsibility, was all smiles. Minnie's bed was warmed, and Toney worked so hard for the next hour that she had no time to think of outside things. The door was barricaded, and Toney, finding some ink and a pen, wrote in large black letters: "*Very catching. No admittance.*" This notice she stuck into all the windows, so that in a short time the village was convulsed with curiosity and the truth was soon known. Nevertheless the place was barricaded, and it was literally true that no one could get in.

It was only when Dr. Latham had got home and changed his clothes and sent word to his wife that she must take the child away, taking every other necessary precaution, that it came over him that he had given his consent to a very strange thing. He had, of course, heard about Toney's arrival, but he had never before spoken to her and this was his first introduction to her. Her energy and her courage had, for the time being, wiped away all his reluctance to dictate to Lady Dove's niece. Still he knew that this special attack of scarlet fever was most infectious, that it might spread through the village, bringing with it a disaster or death to many a poor family. This girl had at once gone to the root of the matter and had placed herself in the breach, doing it as happily as if it were the most ordinary thing in the world to undertake the care of a sick child and of a cottage.

His first duty, after seeing about medicines, was to go up to Aldersfield House. Wishing to save me he went down the road so as to enter at the

small gate which led across the park and was a short cut to the house. As he neared the gate Lewis Waycott met him.

"Hulloa, Latham, just the person I wanted to see," said the Squire.

"Is it pressing, for I am in a hurry?"

"Oh, you are going to Aldersfield House. I'll come with you. I want to know if you are doctoring a certain Henry Faber, a returned missionary, lodging at the Todds' at Winchley?"

"Yes; he's been overworking in Australia, and the climate has done the rest. That sugarcane heat, after a time, knocks a man down. It is only fit for dark skins."

"Well, but is he really very bad?"

"He can't return to Australia, if that's your meaning. But there is no reason he should not get strong again, if he can find an easy curacy here. But there are no such things in these days."

"That's right. He saved my life when I was a lad, and if I could do anything for him I would willingly. In fact, I mean to do as much as I can. But bishops won't give livings away now as they did formerly, they ask so many questions. Nobody ill at Aldersfield, I hope? I won't delay you any more."

"Thank you. No one is ill there, but to tell you the truth, I don't like my mission. Lady Dove's niece has just done a very plucky thing, but what will her ladyship say? Miss Whitburn declares she won't object, still Lady Dove objects to most things."

"Miss Whitburn! Why, she lunched with us to-

day." The doctor told the story, and Lewis Waycott whistled softly.

"But it must not be allowed," he said at last.

"Well, it's a difficult matter. She must be isolated in any case, and she seems so full of good-will and enthusiasm about nursing. She wants to stamp it out. So do I. I dread that type of scarlet fever. I wish you landlords would look into the matter of drainage more. The village ought to——"

"Is it my cottage?" said Lewis anxiously.

"No, it is on Sir Evas' land; but I've spoken about this before and he pooh-poohs it."

"May I come with you? I expect Lady Dove won't be pleased; but Miss Whitburn is a plucky girl."

"A doctor's daughter. Her father must have been no ordinary man."

"He left her without a penny, and to Lady Dove's tender mercies."

"Anyhow, he prepared her well for them," said Doctor Latham, smiling.

Miss Crump was reading a novel to Lady Dove when the two gentlemen were announced. The poor companion's voice was no longer dull and uninteresting; her eyes were shining with hope. Even Lady Dove's reception of her engagement had not depressed her. She was no longer alone in the world. To-day, however, Lady Dove was very much annoyed that Miss Crump had come home so late. When Mr. Waycott's name was announced, Miss Crump expected to see Toney rush in with him, but she was disappointed.

"I hope you will forgive me, Lady Dove," began

Dr. Latham. "I am the bearer of rather strange news."

Lady Dove was out of temper and therefore forgot to appear gracious.

"Indeed, Dr. Latham! Mr. Waycott, have you seen Antonia since she lunched with you—or is she still with you?"

"No, she left us some time since."

"That is exactly why I have come," said Dr. Latham. "Miss Whitburn, unfortunately, went into a cottage where a little girl is very ill."

"You don't mean to say that the girl has been in an infectious place!" cried Lady Dove. "She must not return here at all on any account. How very wrong! What is it? Where is Sir Evas? Miss Crump, if you please, go and find him."

"I am sorry to say it is a very bad form of scarlet fever. Miss Whitburn nursed the child till I came. I really cannot say that she is free from infection, but of course if she could be placed in a room alone for a few days we should soon see."

Miss Crump turned quite pale when she left the room. She was thinking that if she had not left Toney perhaps this would not have happened.

"Scarlet fever! There is nothing I have such a dread of," exclaimed Lady Dove. "It is most rash to bring it into a house. I have to think of all my servants. Certainly Antonia has acted very wrong. What can we do?"

Lewis Waycott almost said, "She can come to us," but remembering that his own aunts would certainly object, he too was silent.

"Miss Whitburn fully recognizes the danger," said Dr. Latham shortly; "she herself suggests staying where she is; and really if she does not mind, I think it would be the best thing. It is very brave of her. If we can keep it from spreading we shall have done a great work."

"Antonia suggests staying in a cottage! Well, I always say she prefers common people. Indeed, the girl is altogether most extraordinary. I was saying only to-day that I could not possibly keep her here, and this settles it. Oh! here is Sir Evas," and Lady Dove poured out the whole history into the ears of her patient husband.

"If she is not to come back here she had better stay where she is," said the doctor, rising. He had no time to waste over Lady Dove's fears.

"If you will allow me, Sir Evas, I will make a list of things which must be sent down to your niece. Perhaps Miss Crump will see that they are sent down and left in the back garden."

"I really can't have any communication," exclaimed Lady Dove. "What Antonia requires must be sent from Winchley. It will be a great expense, but——"

"Nonsense!" said Sir Evas. "Of course she must have all she wants. There must be some communication. After all, scarlet fever is not the plague."

"We want as little communication as possible, of course," said the doctor. "Miss Whitburn, being a doctor's daughter, quite understands the importance of stamping out this scourge. I have long expected

it. That part of the village is in a very unhealthy condition."

"We can easily manage a sort of lift," said Lewis. "Let me come with you, Dr. Latham, when you have written out your list for Miss Crump."

Lady Dove now began to think she had made a mistake, and, recovering a little from her fright, she said:

"If you please, Miss Crump, put down Dr. Latham's orders. I shall go and tell Rivett to look out some necessaries, but pray use every precaution. Remember how many there are in this house."

"I assure you that is our earnest desire," said Dr. Latham, as Lady Dove left the room followed by Sir Evas.

The doctor went to the table and wrote out a list, and Lewis Waycott turned toward Miss Crump.

"By the way, Miss Crump, Miss Whitburn was full of your good news. May I congratulate you? I'm sure she will be the last person to wish anything like sadness to be connected with to-day. We must all try to do as she wishes."

"Suppose she catches it!" said Miss Crump sadly. "It will be my fault. I ought not to have left her. She is so good, so generous—but even——"

A few tears rolled down her face.

Lewis Waycott was touched at once.

"There is no necessity for her to catch it. She is very strong, and besides she is full of energy and resource. She is used to small places. We must see that she wants for nothing. Dr. Latham will help us to make sure of that."

"If we are spared an epidemic it will be through her courage and prompt action. There being no mother in that cottage, in another hour we should have found it crowded with all the idle women of the village. I will see that she uses every precaution for herself. She must boil all the water and—but really I saw at once that Miss Whitburn has a head on her shoulders. I suppose our colonists bring up their daughters better than we do."

"Lady Dove wouldn't say so," said Lewis smiling. "Well, you will remember your engagement day, Miss Crump! You know how much I owe to Mr. Faber, so you must let me include you in my gratitude."

"If I might go to her," said Miss Crump; "it does not matter about me much."

"Indeed, you must not at present," said Dr. Latham. "If she falls ill we must have an experienced nurse, but there is at present no need. Pray keep Lady Dove from worrying herself about it."

"I will try, but she is very much displeased with me already."

"You are so valuable," said the doctor. "Take it as a compliment."

When the gentlemen went out, Sir Evas joined them. He looked quite sad and careworn.

"I've given orders that she shall have everything you send for. Jim shall take the things and sleep away from the others. Lady Dove is most anxious not to bring any infection into our houseful of servants."

“Very rightly,” said Dr. Latham, who pitied Sir Evas, but Lewis answered:

“I shall talk to Field about my cottages. He is so dilatory, and I suppose I have let things take their course too much. This will be a warning to us.”

“We must make light of it,” said the doctor, “but in truth it is frightfully infectious. I shall be surprised if the other children escape. I shall have the others watched. That man Thomas has been going down hill some time.”

“You mustn’t take all the trouble,” said Sir Evas, who felt that he had made light of past warnings on the subject of drains. “I’ll see about that man. Toney said he wasn’t fit to be left to his own devices. Really she is a very knowing girl, but sometimes she takes one’s breath away.”

“Well, I wish she were my niece,” were the doctor’s last words.

Lewis Waycott went home making many good resolutions about his cottages, and what was better he spoke about them to Field that very day.

Without meaning it Toney had become the centre of every conversation, that evening, in the village and roundabout.

Some blessed her, some smiled, a few praised her and recognized that she was something more than a harum-scarum girl. Only Miss Crump, however, in her lonely room knelt down and prayed for her.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE ANGEL OF DEATH.

MARY THOMAS had never felt so proud as she did when Toney set her to work; neither had she ever worked so hard at scrubbing, cleaning, and dusting as she did when she found herself in the barricaded cottage alone with Lady Dove's niece.

"If you had lived in a humpy, Mary, you would have learned the meaning of being clean. There, now, I can breathe a little. Fresh air and clean water aren't dear, and soap's cheaper here than in the Bush. We have to make this into a cottage hospital, remember, and the nurse and doctor will be very particular."

"Oh, Miss," said Mary, "I do try, but it don't seem to matter in general, but I'll do it always now." Mary would have scrubbed a nigger white had he, at the moment, fallen under her influence. "Minnie is better, isn't she, Miss? She don't moan so much."

Toney was fanning the child's hot face and trying to make her drink the medicine which had arrived. There was a gate in the garden at the back of the cottage, leading into a field. Doctor Latham had ordered the things to be brought there and placed by the back door; if necessary, they could be drawn up

from the window. Now that he knew Lady Dove's wishes on the subject, he meant to try the experiment thoroughly. Not another soul should go near the child, unless of course Mary or Miss Whitburn herself felt ill.

Toney's patient was in the front room. She had taken possession of the back one herself, and Mary slept in a tiny passage opening out of it. By eight o'clock everything was beautifully straight and clean, as far, that is, as circumstance allowed. When nightfall came the doctor appeared again, coming in by the back way.

He told Toney all that had taken place, but not enough to satisfy her curiosity about Miss Crump, and of course he made light of Lady Dove's fears.

"I have sent away my wife and my little boy," he added, "as there may be some slight fears for them. I shall be easier if I am alone. We doctors have to be doubly careful that we do not carry the disease we pretend to cure. Has everything come that you want for the night? You and Mary must watch in turns. There is not much to be done, but the child must not be left alone."

"Poor darling, she doesn't know me now," said Toney. "Oh, Dr. Latham, she was just the sweetest child here—my first friend."

"If we pull her through you will have done a good work. Are you strong?"

"I should think so. I don't know what it is to be ill. I have got everything I want. You should have seen Jim's face when he came. He looked so

scared when he arrived with the basket." And Toney laughed happily.

"Anyhow, you have good spirits, I see. That is a great blessing."

"Pups said nurses were bound to be cheerful, but I'm not given to low spirits. Dr. Latham, how did Miss Crump look? You know it is her engagement day. I'm afraid she'll worry a little."

"She wanted to come to you, but of course her duty is with Lady Dove. I don't think she looks fit for an emergency."

"But there is a lot of endurance in her, though not much stamina. She hasn't had enough fresh air."

"So I should imagine. Now, have you everything you want? I ordered the sheets and some blankets."

"Oh, heaps more of everything than I had in our humpy. Sometimes, you know, we had only our 'grub and a blanket,' as our boy said. Pups could make anything look comfortable with almost nothing. It was just something in him."

Dr. Latham went away quite charmed with his young lady nurse. He really could not pity her, for Miss Whitburn looked very unlike a person requiring pity.

Toney would not leave her small patient all night. The child was certainly very ill, but her nurse was used to fevers and was not at all frightened. In the early morning, however, she went to the back room to lie down for a little while, leaving Mary to watch. Just as she was preparing to do this, a pebble rattled against her window, and looking out she saw Sir Evas.

"Toney, Toney, my dear, I've just come out to see how you do."

Toney's face was radiant.

"Oh, Uncle Dove, it does one good to see your face. Don't you frown so much. It's a jolly morning, isn't it? I want to stretch my legs, otherwise I'm first rate. Minnie's no worse. The doctor will come early, I know. Now I'm going to have forty winks. But, Uncle Dove, do just tell me, ain't you just glad about Crumpet? Have you congratulated her properly?"

"Oh, I forgot all about it, Toney. You put it out of my head. Whatever did you go and stuff yourself in here for?"

"Why, it's your cottage, Uncle, and you see it's part of my duty. But I'm real jolly. No time-table you see! You will just say something to Crumpet, though, and give her my love—on the sly—and tell her to be sure and keep up her spirits. She wants thumping a bit. But her young man is really quite a saintly sort of missionary. I *was* glad he had no gin—wife, I mean—aren't you, Uncle Dove?"

"Of course, of course. Very suitable, but nothing to live on."

"I say, Uncle Dove, I wish you'd write to General Stone and tell him from me that I hope the whistle is useful, and tell him what I'm doing and any little news that comes into your head. He was so kind to me—he really was."

"Ah, so I will. He took a great interest in you, Toney."

"Did he? Is Aunt Dove angry? I really did it all of a minute without thinking. Do tell her. But you see she doesn't want me at all, and so she won't worry."

Sir Evas waved a good-by and retired. He felt very like a thief, but he kept his counsel and delivered none of Toney's messages.

Toney took her forty winks and did not wake till the doctor came. He found everything had been done, and, moreover, done excellently well.

"You are a born nurse, Miss Whitburn."

"No, Pups made me one. We had cases sometimes in our house when the people had no relations handy. He liked to have me better than a trained nurse, he said, because I obeyed and didn't go by hard-and-fast rules. But I say, doctor, poor Minnie's worse, isn't she?"

"Yes, she's worse to-day. I expected it. Are you afraid of being left?"

"Afraid, oh, no! I only obey orders, and Pups said a nurse had to obey, that was all."

"You do that excellently well. I'll come again at midday."

Toney had several garden visitors that morning. The first was Lewis Waycott, and when she put out her head, looking a little paler, but smiling as usual, he was reassured.

"Don't you come too near," she called out. "I've got carbolic sheets and all sorts of smelling things, but still—oh, Mr. Waycott! does your aunt think I'm very stupid?"

"No, of course not."

"Well, I'm glad. I wish you'd go and congratulate Crumpet."

"I've done it really and truly, but I'll do it again if you like."

They both laughed.

"I mustn't stay now, but it was kind of you to come," said Toney.

"Oh, no, not at all. Can you hoist up this basket? Aunt Honoria sent it, and I've put in some flowers. I know you like choice flowers."

"Well, now! No one has thought of flowers but you. You are just jolly."

"I'm glad you think so, anyhow. Miss Toney, I'm going to have a campaign among my cottages. Do you know that Latham has several times talked to me about sanitary matters, but I left it all to Field? I think I'll see to it myself in future."

"I am glad. Pups said that when he was a boy, landowners were all far too sleepy about such things. If you could see poor Minnie—she's very ill—you would see to the cottages yourself. Thank you. Good-by."

"I'll come again if you will let me."

Poor Thomas, frightened now into soberness, also came to inquire about his child. Toney was not able to see him, but Mary carried on the conversation, and Lady Dove's niece silently laughed at some of it which she overheard.

Another day went by, and yet another. Lewis Waycott came every day, sometimes twice a day; so did Mr. Hales and Sir Evas, but the latter came without telling Lady Dove, though strangely enough

he was always ready and able to deliver a message from her. Miss Crump sent notes by Jim, but she was not allowed to receive any in return. Altogether, Toney felt that she was having rather a good time. If only she could have had a good run, but that was impossible. Even sleep was curtailed, as Mary wanted a good deal of rest. On the third day, however, the doctor came accompanied by an old woman, Minnie's maternal grandmother, who, having heard of the illness, came from a distant village "to give a hand," as she expressed it.

"I am afraid, Miss Whitburn, that the old lady will be of no use as far as nursing goes," said the doctor. "She is as deaf as a post and she will only give you extra work, but I thought, under the circumstances, it was better to let her come. Minnie is very, very ill."

"Oh, of course," exclaimed Toney, shaking hands with the old woman, who was deaf and dim-sighted. "I can make signs. We must not shout in the room. She can help to keep up the fire and perhaps she can watch the pot boil, but I have very little cooking to do, for I get such good things sent to me every day. I'll put a mattress on the floor for myself and she can have the big bed."

"You'll be uncomfortable, I am afraid."

Toney only laughed, and Dr. Latham was reassured. Such splendid health as she possessed was a daily pleasure to him to behold.

Old Mrs. Grenham, being able to sit by the sick child, gave Toney a little more time to herself, so she employed her leisure by writing to General Stone.

She wanted to be sure he had heard all about Miss Crump's engagement. This was the letter she wrote to him :

MY DEAR GENERAL STONE:—

I'm going to send you a letter from an infected place. (Uncle Dove has told you all about it, I know.) But don't be afraid. Your letter shall have two carbolic baths before you receive it. Dr. Latham and I are fighting infection. It's so delightful to feel I am doing some of Pups' work. My patient is very ill, but we do everything we can to save her. If only it doesn't spread we shall be glad. I'm going to take you at your word. Will you please send me two shillings, and I'll send you a whistle or something else as soon as it's safe. The old lady who is with me wants some snuff so badly, and she hasn't any money, and I haven't any either, as you know. I don't like to ask Uncle Evas, as I don't think he cares to buy odd things. I want to know if you are quite well. I do wish you could come and have a talk under the window. Uncle Dove says I am like Juliet; my chief Romeos are Jim, Mr. Waycott, and Uncle Dove. You know how he likes to make fun. But the greatest piece of news of all is that Miss Crump is really engaged to be-married. Have you found the living? Don't forget it, please. I think the Archbishop gives livings away to good men, and really Mr. Faber is a kind of an early Christian. I am sure he would give his clothes away, but from something Crumpet said I rather fancy he has only two suits. She writes such funny notes about him. She is head over ears in love. Aunt Dove is very angry and says Miss Crump is not to leave her. Aunt is very much afraid of infection, so I can't write to her and tell her that I mean to succeed Miss Crump. I shall have twenty pounds a year if I give satisfaction! I do want to have a good run again.

I should so much like to drive you this afternoon; Bess goes a mile a minute when she's well driven. Uncle Dove comes on the sly, I'm sure, though he doesn't tell me so; and I really believe he invents Aunt Dove's messages. He is getting quite clever over it. I'm afraid it's wrong, but it's very amusing! I don't tell him I have found him out! Yesterday he said that Aunt Dove hoped I should soon be back again. You know she doesn't like me at all much, so that was a very big white lie. I send messages back to her, but I'm sure he does not give them. He brought me a meringue the other day wrapped up in a letter. He knows I like them, but the cream all squished out at one end in his pocket. He pretended he didn't mind! I hope Aunt Dove won't find it out. I've only one more thing to say. Did you mean to give Jim a sovereign or a shilling? I've got the sovereign and will return it if you meant it for a shilling. He was awfully pleased. I'm keeping it for him; it's wiser. Young men say "yes" so easily. One must help them to resist the wish to go on a drunk. Please answer soon about the snuff.

I am always,

Your affectionate

TONEY.

P. S. I still think you the nicest General I have seen. When Mr. Faber was asking Miss Crump, I had to vault over a gate into a field. They hadn't quite done when I came back. It was very awkward, but they didn't seem to mind. The armchair looks beautiful. I hope Aunt Dove will let Crumpet take it away with her. How much does it cost to furnish an English house? Our humpy was rigged up for two pounds.

Toney's fingers felt cramped after finishing this letter, but she stretched her arms and legs by mak-

ing the beds and then cooking some till the doctor came.

"Look here, Miss Whitburn, you must have a good night. I shall come and sit up to-night. Mrs. Grenham can sit with me."

"Of course I must obey," said Toney, "and I am rather sleepy—only do you know, Dr. Latham, that Mary has a queer look in her eyes this evening and she is so drowsy." The doctor glanced at Toney admiringly.

"You have found it out! Yes, I feel sure she is in for it too. If only we can keep it to these two!"

"We will, of course. Quarantine shan't be broken," and Toney's tone was resolute. She went to bed, as she was told, knowing that her strength must be husbanded. The next morning she woke early and jumping out of bed she dressed quickly, then she opened her window and let the sweet air come in. When she went to Mary's bedside she shook her curly head rather sadly as she felt the girl's hot hands. After she had said her prayers Toney stepped out softly and entered the sick-room. Dr. Latham beckoned her to come near the bed.

"She is dead," he said softly. "She must be buried this evening. I will not let any one come here. I can manage everything."

A few tears slowly fell down Toney's cheeks.

"Dear little Minnie. I knew from the first that there was very little hope; but come to Mary. We must save her. It's no use crying."

They left the old grandmother sitting near the dead

child with her hands in her lap, wearing a sad look, but too old to cry.

"She wur the prettiest of Polly's children," she said again and again.

It needed all Toney's courage to bear up that day, for she had to comfort the old woman as well as to attend to poor Mary.

"She be took for death, too, my dear," said Mrs. Grenham. "Don't 'ee tire yourself out; it's the Lord's will."

"Oh, no," said Toney, "of course it isn't. We've taken it in time with Mary, I hope."

When Mr. Waycott came, Toney could not smile as usual.

"Mr. Waycott, will you fetch me the loveliest flowers you've got, please, to put over little Minnie. Aunt Dove won't let me have her best flowers, I know, but you won't mind, will you?"

"You shall have the very best," said Lewis, dreadfully distressed at the idea of Toney's being shut up with the dead child.

"Don't look grave. I'm all right. We'll pull Mary through. Dr. Latham is something like Pups. Don't you think there'll be a front row in heaven for doctors?"

"I'm sure there will, but I'll go and fetch the flowers now myself."

"That is good of you. There's Mr. Hales, will you tell him? I mustn't leave Mary any more," and Toney disappeared for the rest of that day.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS.

THERE was still a strict quarantine round the infected cottage, and still Toney and the doctor bravely fought against the disease. Mary had been at death's door, but the news spread at last, with wonderful rapidity, that the little girl was out of danger. It had needed all Toney's powers of endurance to go through with her self-imposed heroic deed, but she had stood the test, and never did Dr. Latham hear her utter one word of complaint or regret. He himself had done wonders, but then that belonged to the unrecognized heroism of his profession.

Mary's recovery was very slow. If she could have been moved it would have been quicker, but there was still a fear of infection, though the many precautions already taken minimized the danger. Everything belonging to little Minnie had already been burnt by the doctor at night, and as soon as he could send the patient away he meant to purify the cottage himself before he let in the workmen, for the poor classes have not yet learned the imperative duty of stamping out disease.

Toney appeared paler and tired, but her spirits were still good, and she looked very happy when Dr.

Latham's few words of praise told her that her work had not been in vain. Not one other case had occurred in the village.

"Can you last out another week, Miss Whitburn?" he said one day. "By that time I can find you some cottage by the sea, where you three shall go and live alone till all fear has passed away. Thomas, by the bye, is an altered man. I hear that little Minnie's death has had such an effect upon him."

Toney was delighted, only she did wish he could soon find a wife. The next time Mr. Hales came to talk to her he told her this wish was very likely to be granted, for Thomas had been lodging with a very nice widow who had managed to keep him from the public house and was even thinking of taking care of him and of his children for the rest of her life.

"Turning him out of his house has brought that about," said the Vicar, smiling. "It's an ill wind that blows no one any good, though I do not mean that you are an ill wind—quite the contrary—for all the village is singing your praises. Lady Dove says that she is very glad that she spared you, because through your prompt action the sad experience of a few years back has been avoided."

Toney laughed, but she said nothing to betray Lady Dove. Next time Sir Evas came she exclaimed:

"Uncle Dove, how is Trick? Has Miss Crump taken him for a walk every day?"

"Oh, yes, every day. He is still very sad; but if he came with me, he would be sure to get to you by some means or other."

"Yes, but I do miss him so much. I'm going to

take him to the sea, however. Dr. Latham says I may, so, dear Uncle Dove, you must let Jim bring him here before we go. Oh, Uncle Dove, there's one thing which disturbs me very much. The General has never answered a letter I wrote to him and it isn't like him at all. I'm afraid he's worse."

"I didn't like to tell you, Toney, but he is very ill. His heart disease is much worse. I've heard from the Captain to-day, and he sent you a message from his brother."

"There! I knew he would."

Sir Evas took a letter out of his pocket and read these words to Toney:

"My brother has two doctors and two good nurses, but they are not very hopeful. He has to be kept quite quiet. They call it a clot of blood; and though it's not quite hopeless, any moment may be his last. He showed me a letter the other day and signified I was to say he could not answer it now, but that he would do so as soon as he could. It was from your niece. He received it the day before he was taken ill. I hope she is feeling well." Toney looked very thoughtful:

"Oh, dear, Uncle Dove, I am sorry. I wrote about Mr. Faber's living. You will have to find one for him. Tell me if the romance is still beautiful? I am sorry I could not watch progress, but Crumpet writes lovely letters about 'dear Henry,' only they can't meet very often."

"Your aunt isn't very much pleased about it. You see Miss Crump knows her ways so well. Anyhow, Faber must wait for the living."

"Suppose you'd waited fifteen years for Aunt Dove?"

"Well. Ahem! I wasn't a missionary, you see, Toney."

"I am tied by the leg here so I can't do anything. If Crumpet was to wait another fifteen years, she might die of a broken heart! Pups said he wasn't sure that people ever did do that, but we disagreed on that subject. It isn't romantic at all to live after you have been very, very much disappointed in love."

"I dare say some people are very glad afterward, Toney. Here's another meringue, my dear; I've brought it in a sandwich tin this time, to avoid the last catastrophe."

"Oh, Mary will be glad! She's just now very dainty about eating. So bring something original every day if you can, dear Uncle Dove."

"By the way, Toney, your aunt says she hopes you are keeping up your strength. She added that it was very dull without you."

Toney popped her head in from the window to have a little private laugh over this message, but when she reappeared she was quite grave again.

"Will you mind just telegraphing for me to the General? It only costs sixpence; and please say, Toney is awfully sorry, and if it's safe would he like to have her for a nurse?"

"All right, but he's got trained nurses, Toney; he won't want you."

"Well, then, give aunt my love and tell her that I'm quite prepared now to be her companion, for I've

learnt to sit still here. Perhaps she'll let Crumpet see her missionary oftener if she is sure of her successor—and tell Trick to be patient.”

“You burden my memory without scruple. As for Trick, the servants all make a great fuss with him, and Jim's quite a fool over him. Well, good-by. Here's Lewis Waycott.”

Lewis Waycott always brought lovely flowers, so that Toney's cottage, in this respect, was a palace of beauty. Mary learned more housework during her convalescent stage than she had ever done all her life before, for she liked watching Miss Toney's ways of doing things and retailing it to her grandmother, who only heard about half she said.

The week was drawing to an end, and Toney began to think with regret of going away from her cottage life. Her friends had been very kind, and Miss Honoria and Mrs. Hales had been unremitting in their kindness in thinking of things to send her. As for Lewis Waycott, he was “nearly as thoughtful as Pups,” Toney told her uncle, and he thought of the most delightful things to amuse Mary. Indeed, Toney thought the girl would look back to her illness and regret its end. The sadness of little Minnie's death had, however, thrown a lasting shadow over this period.

Toney sat to-day at the open window expecting Jim. When he came, besides provisions, he brought Trick and a letter from the faithful chum. When Toney had hugged Trick she opened the letter and uttered an exclamation of joy, making the deaf Mrs. Grenham hurry in to see what was the matter with

the young lady. Toney had to make the most of her companion's capacity for joy when hers overflowed.

To-day it was caused by Miss Crump's note:

Oh, my dear Toney, how can I tell you of our happiness! Henry has had to-day the offer of a living from a gentleman who lives twenty miles from here. He is a friend of General Stone, and it is through him that he heard of Henry. He has taken some time to make inquiries, but he says he has now much pleasure in offering him the living of Woodside, a small country village, possessing a pretty parsonage-house, but he says the income is only three hundred a year, but that there are no expenses. This sounds like great riches to us. Henry wants our wedding to take place as soon as possible, but what shall I do? What will Lady Dove say? I tell you the news first, dear Toney, as I know it is your doing. You have been our good angel, and Henry begs me to say that he hopes you will look upon Woodside as your home—that is, if ever you are in need of one. You know all we have shall be yours. My joy makes me selfish. I hear this morning that that kind General is worse, and that the Captain has asked Sir Evas to come up and see him. He will never know how grateful we are, though of course I shall ask Sir Evas to tell him so if he finds an opportunity, but he may be too ill to listen. I am glad you will soon be here again. Every one says that the danger is over now, but I hear that Dr. Latham means to see to everything himself, and Sir Evas says he will have the whole cottage whitewashed and repaired when you go out of it. Lady Dove is going to have some friends to tea to-day, so I must do the flowers and a hundred things besides; but everything seems easy now. We do not meet often, but Henry writes every

day to me, and such beautiful letters! I am not at all worthy of him. In haste,

Your happy

CHUM.

Toney was as happy as possible except at the thought of the dear old General's pain. She sat down and wrote a few lines to him to thank him for the living, and her gratitude was expressed in no measured words.

The next morning was Sunday. It was now settled that they were to go on the Monday to a cottage at Porlock Weir, lent to Dr. Latham for their benefit by a friend who owned it. Toney had soon finished the simple packing, and then she sat down to read the morning service to Mary and the grandmother, whose responses seldom fitted into the text. Then she heard Mary's catechism, taught her a hymn, and then she began wondering what to do next, because her Sunday dinner had been sent ready cooked from Aldersfield House. The sweet May air was coming in at the open window, making her long to go out.

She did not expect visitors this morning till after service-time, but suddenly she heard herself called:

"Miss Whitburn!" It was Lewis Waycott.

"Oh, gracious stars! Why aren't you in church, Mr. Waycott?"

"I had a little note from Sir Evas, and he begged me to tell you that he could not come this morning because Lady Dove is indisposed. Here is another letter that I was to give you, and this is some money for your journey; but Dr. Latham is going to travel

with you. He says you may all come back in ten days."

Toney drew up her basket containing her letters and found with them a beautiful bunch of lilies of the valley which Lewis Waycott had picked himself for her.

"Oh, these are sweet! Thank you so much. Such nice letters too! How is the dear General, did Uncle tell you? And oh, do you know that he has found a living for Mr. Faber? I am so happy about it."

"Yes, Faber wrote and told me. I am truly glad."

"This will be the last time you see me most likely, except under other circumstances," said Toney laughing.

"Oh, nonsense! It's impossible!"

"I shan't mind very much—I've learned so much here. I expect I wanted to learn to sit still, but oh, it will be nice to run about! I shall run up and down the shore when I have time, and I long to feel the seabreeze. I love the sea, don't you? And I shall drink tea with all our meals, as we do at home."

"Very bad for your nerves," said Lewis, laughing.

"But I haven't any. Oh! Mr. Waycott, I have never thanked you for being so delightfully chummy all this time. I shan't ever forget it—indeed I shan't."

"There's nothing to remember," said Lewis, smiling up at the bright face surrounded with the lovely hair. "I shall be very glad when you come back. As to being Lady Dove's companion, I can't allow it. Aunt Honor says it's nonsense. Do you know that you have quite won her heart?"

"Have I? Well, that is good of her, but it isn't nonsense. If you knew how happy Crumpet is you wouldn't mind. But she hasn't learned to ride. Can she keep a pony carriage on three hundred a year, do you think?"

"That shall be my wedding present," said Lewis suddenly. "A pony carriage and a pony. A real nice little turn out, in remembrance of your and Miss Crump's visit to me."

"Oh!" said Toney. "Well! I shall be happy when I get back. You'll let me be there when it comes, won't you? Crumpet's face will shine like anything."

"Of course, and you shall choose anything you like for their house."

"Do you mean it?"

"Of course I do, Miss Whitburn. You know he saved my life, but even——"

Toney turned her face away a moment. She felt a little lump in her throat for very joy.

"Well, you are nearly as nice as the General," she said, popping back again.

"When you come back I want to ask you to do something for me, Miss Whitburn."

"For you? Why, what could I do? But of course I will, only you have everything you want."

"Aunt Honor says I always get all I want."

"Does she? It's nice getting what one wants for other people."

"Oh, I know you think that, but I'm not you."

"You see you are much nicer. I can't give Crumpet anything because I've got no money. The dear

old General would have— Well, he may get better. I shall soon come home. But what do you want?”

“I want you to promise not—not to be Lady Dove’s companion.”

Toney laughed happily.

“I can’t, really. I shan’t mind much, and I shall earn my board and keep; and oh! indeed, I can’t promise that. You must ask something else.”

“Well, so I will some day, Miss Whitburn.”

“Oh, do say Toney! at least till I’m Aunt Dove’s companion, and then she’ll not think it becoming.” and Toney laughed happily.

“Well, then, Toney, will you promise that when you come back you’ll grant me something I’ll ask of you?”

“I can’t think what it can be, but of course I will. It can’t be to make you a whistle, because I expect you can make them yourself; but I did make that dear old General a very nice one.”

“That was very good of you. I wish you had given it to me instead.”

“But I sold it to him.” Lewis laughed, and Toney joined in.

“Sold it! Was it expensive?”

“It cost five shillings! You see, I wanted the money badly to finish Crumpet’s armchair. I really did hope Mr. Faber would propose to her when she sat in it, but he didn’t.”

“You never want anything for yourself. But I’m in earnest when I say that I won’t have you plagued by that—aunt of yours. She ought to consider you more.”

"Why, I'm only Toney, you know; and I'm not half educated, and I'm not a young lady. Aunt Dove says so."

"I don't want you at all different, anyhow. There, now, is it a promise that you will do something for me instead of the General when I ask you?"

"Yes, if I can, because you have been so awfully nice and chummy."

"May I trust you?"

"I think so; Pups always did. Do look at Trick! Isn't he lovely? He's so glad to see me again, only he's looking at your heels. It's lucky we are separated."

"Trick is witness of your promise, isn't he?"

"Oh, yes! He's very, very honorable himself. Good-by, I must go and see after Mary. She is getting so fat from eating all the good things which are sent to us. Mr. Waycott, please tell Miss Honoria that I fear I shall never be able to run again. I have become stiff. I expect Mrs. Hamilton will be less surprised next time she sees me. Good-by again. Trick and I have promised."

"All right, Miss Whitburn. I've got a horse for you to ride when you come back; and if you won't use it, Miss Crump shan't have that pony carriage for her wedding present."

"Then I won't give you a wedding present," said Toney laughing, "though I'm afraid mine won't be worth having."

"Yes, it will. Good-by." Lewis disappeared, and Jim appeared with his usual burden of food and letters.

Miss Crump's letter was, as usual, full of dear Henry. But enclosed in Sir Evas' envelope was one addressed in a strange business hand for Toney. Her uncle's letter was short:

DEAR TONEY:—

I know you will be sorry that our dear old friend is dead. He was one of the best and kindest of men on earth. I was in time to see him alive. He even looked at your letter and motioned me to read it to him. Then he smiled and said something I couldn't hear. They said he was better, but an hour after he had a sudden fainting attack and died without recovering consciousness. I enclose a letter that I was told to give you. It is dictated, I see. Your aunt is not very well. She has heard of Mr. Faber's living, and it has upset her a good deal; also she feels the General's death.

Your affectionate uncle,
EVAS DOVE.

"He'll see Pups," said Toney half aloud as she sat by her open window. "He and Minnie will tell him I've gone on with some of his work. I wonder what it's like? Pups said we should go on working for other people, but that there would be no sadness in the work."

She slowly undid the seal of the other letter and glanced over it; then she knelt down against the window-sill and sobbed out:

"Oh, Pups, Pups, and you won't come back here a tiny minute just to—to—help me!" After a little while, however, she wiped her tears away and jumped up.

"I'll make a vow now," she said, "just a downright, serious vow. All my life long I'll give good times to poor companions and people that haven't my luck. It all comes of Pups' old book and reading about the basket of Gwyddneu Garanhir."

At that moment Jim reappeared.

"Please, Miss, I forgot to say that Lady Dove sent word as how she was very glad to get rid of Trick, and hopes you won't bring any infection with you when you come back."

"Jim, can you give two messages just as I give them to you?"

"Yes, Miss."

"Tell Miss Crump I'm longing to see her and I'll take her place directly I get home."

"Yes, Miss."

"And tell Aunt Dove that I'm awfully sorry, and that I shall do my best to fill the gap."

"Yes, Miss."

"Don't forget about being awfully sorry, because I am afraid she'll be disappointed about something else."

"Yes, Miss."

When Jim was gone, Toney gathered her faithful friend in her arms.

"Trick, Trick, you darling, come and listen to this letter. Trick, dear, we're no longer poor relations. It's very, very odd, and just like Pups' old book. Now listen, Trick:

DEAR MADAM:—

I have the honor to inform you that the late General Stone has left his large fortune to you, subject

to the payment of several legacies and donations to charitable establishments. Before his death he told me to write to you as soon as all should be over, and to tell you from him that he makes you his heir in order to relieve Lady Dove from the heavy burden of keeping you, about which she had spoken to him. He believed also that you would always spend his money for the good of others, as he was certain that you knew your duty to your neighbor better than any one else with whom he was at present acquainted. His last words to me were: "Tell her that I give it to her with the love and blessing of an old man who is glad to have known her."

Believe me, dear Madam,

Yours faithfully,

HERBERT STAINES.

P. S. Sir Evas is made your sole guardian till you are of age, but Lady Dove is to receive a large yearly allowance for you as long as you stay under her kind protection, out of which sum your pocket-money will in future be paid. I shall write all further business particulars to Sir Evas Dove himself.

Trick barked his approbation with so much enthusiasm that Toney had to quiet him by putting him on his honor.

"Miss Toney, there's father," said Mary interrupting this discipline, and Mr. Thomas, cap in hand, spoke hesitatingly and with much shamefacedness.

"If you please, Miss, I've made so bold as to come and thank you for all you've done for me and mine, and the whole village is anxious as how you should know it has took note of all you've done for them,

and that it don't know how to express their dooty and thanks as they should."

"Oh, dear, Mr. Thomas, I'm glad they don't, because—because it's been just good for me to be here. Please tell them that I'll do it again if necessary; and oh! I say, Mr. Thomas, I'm glad you're going to be married and live happy ever after. Will you mind telling people that I'm going to live here always, and that I hope they'll never want for water and good drains and all that, and that I'm rather upside down to-day, but that I do want to do my duty here; and would you mind saying that, with God's help, so I will. It's part of the catechism, you know; and Mary has learnt it up since she's been ill. Good-by. I can't shake hands because I can't reach you—but oh, no, I can't say any more—except will you tell people that it's Dr. Latham who has fought it out? He's just the best and kindest doctor in the world, now that Pups isn't in it. Good-by. Oh, Trick, you'll have to learn to sit still, as I've done," she added for Trick's lively good-by caused the interview to end suddenly, for neither Toney nor Mr. Thomas could hear what was said.

Toney had come to Aldersfield as a poor relation, but little welcomed by the woman who should have been a mother to her; she left it the next morning, in company with Mrs. Grenham, Mary, Dr. Latham, and Trick, as the heiress of the rich General Stone. But neither money nor worldly honor could make Toney other than nature had made her, or could alter the principles she had imbibed from her father. She

did not regret poverty, however; but as she sat in the train she built beautiful castles in the air, which some day should turn into brick-and-mortar houses, where all who were poor and needy should find shelter for their bodies and love for their souls.

THE END.

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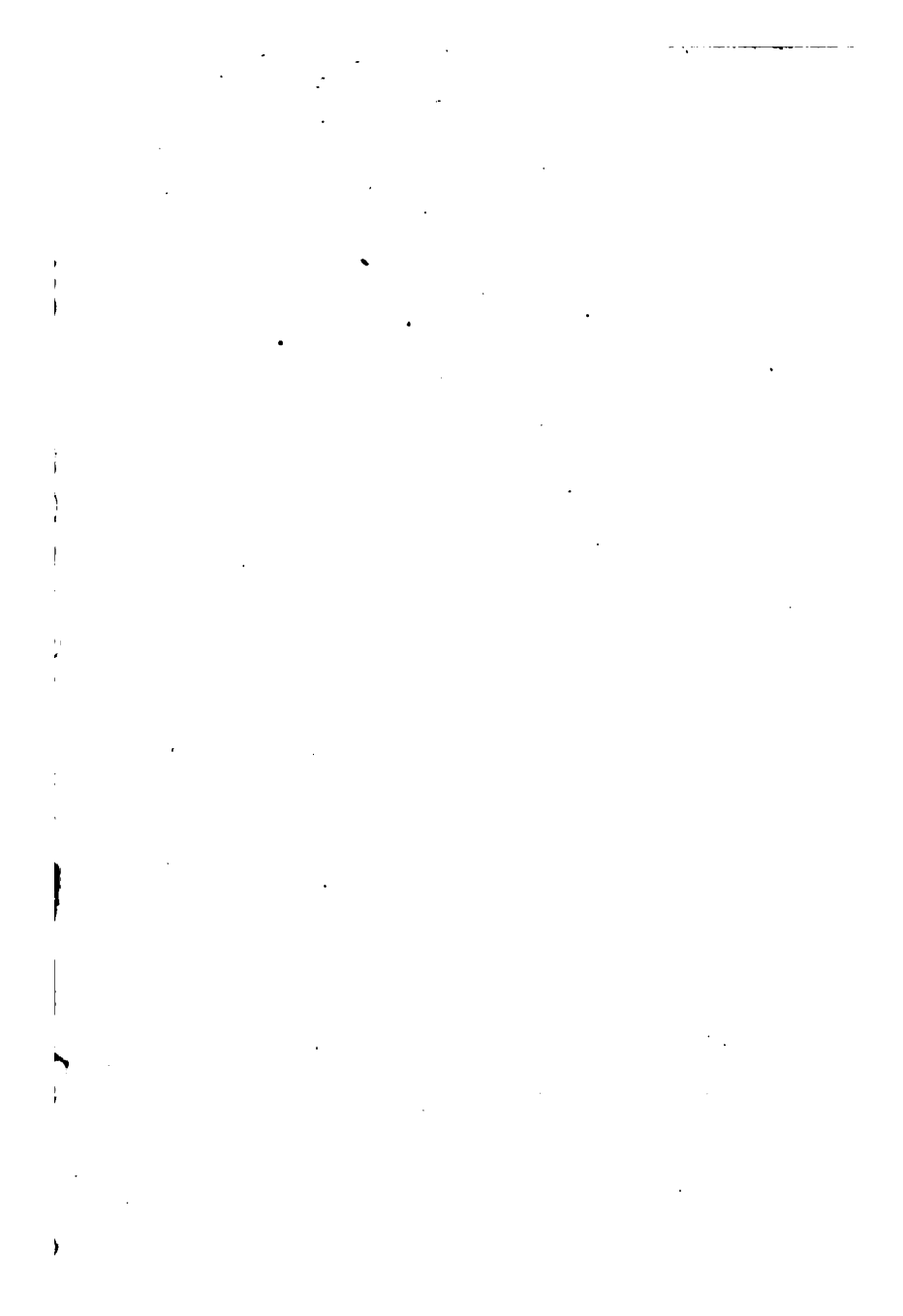
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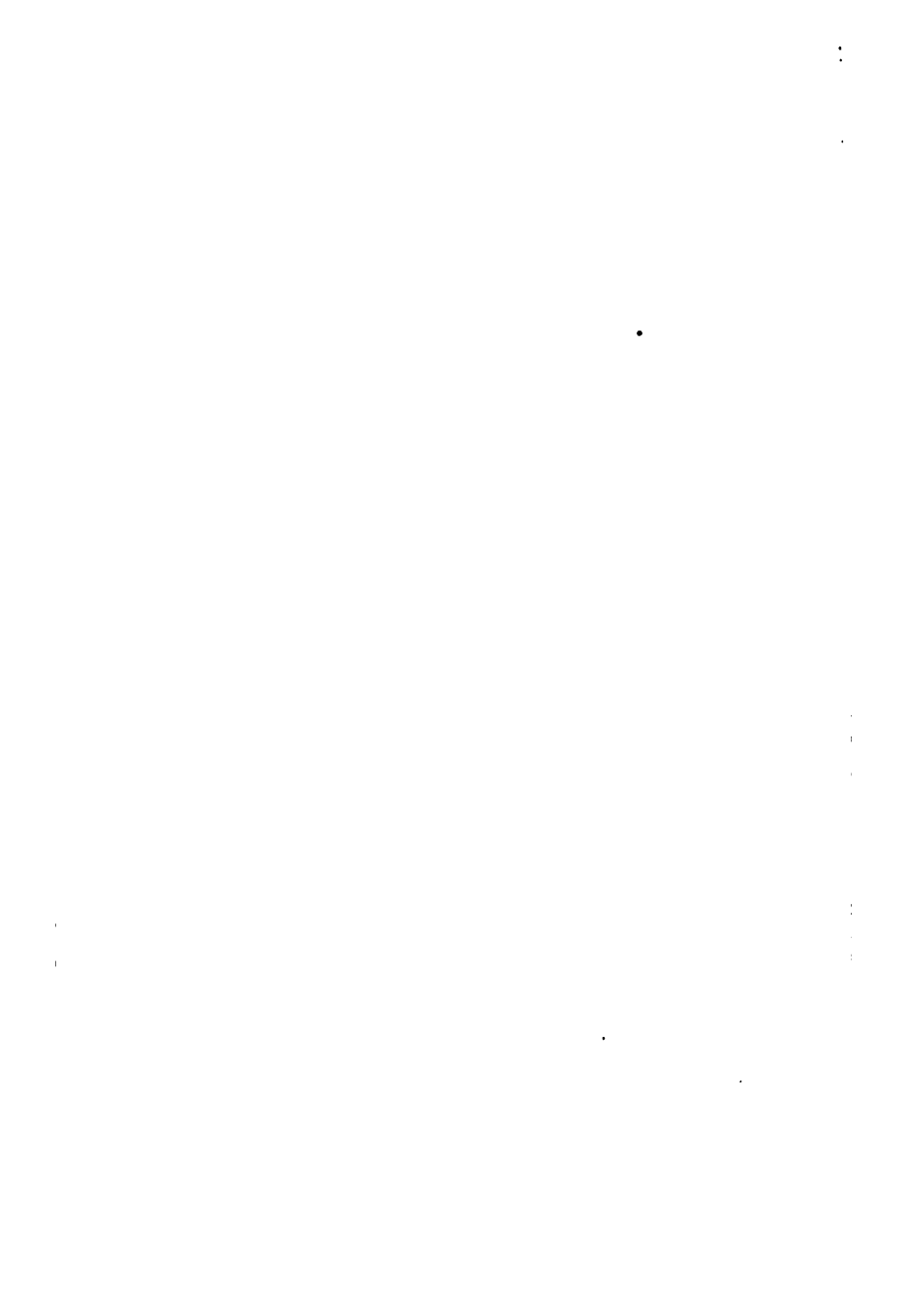
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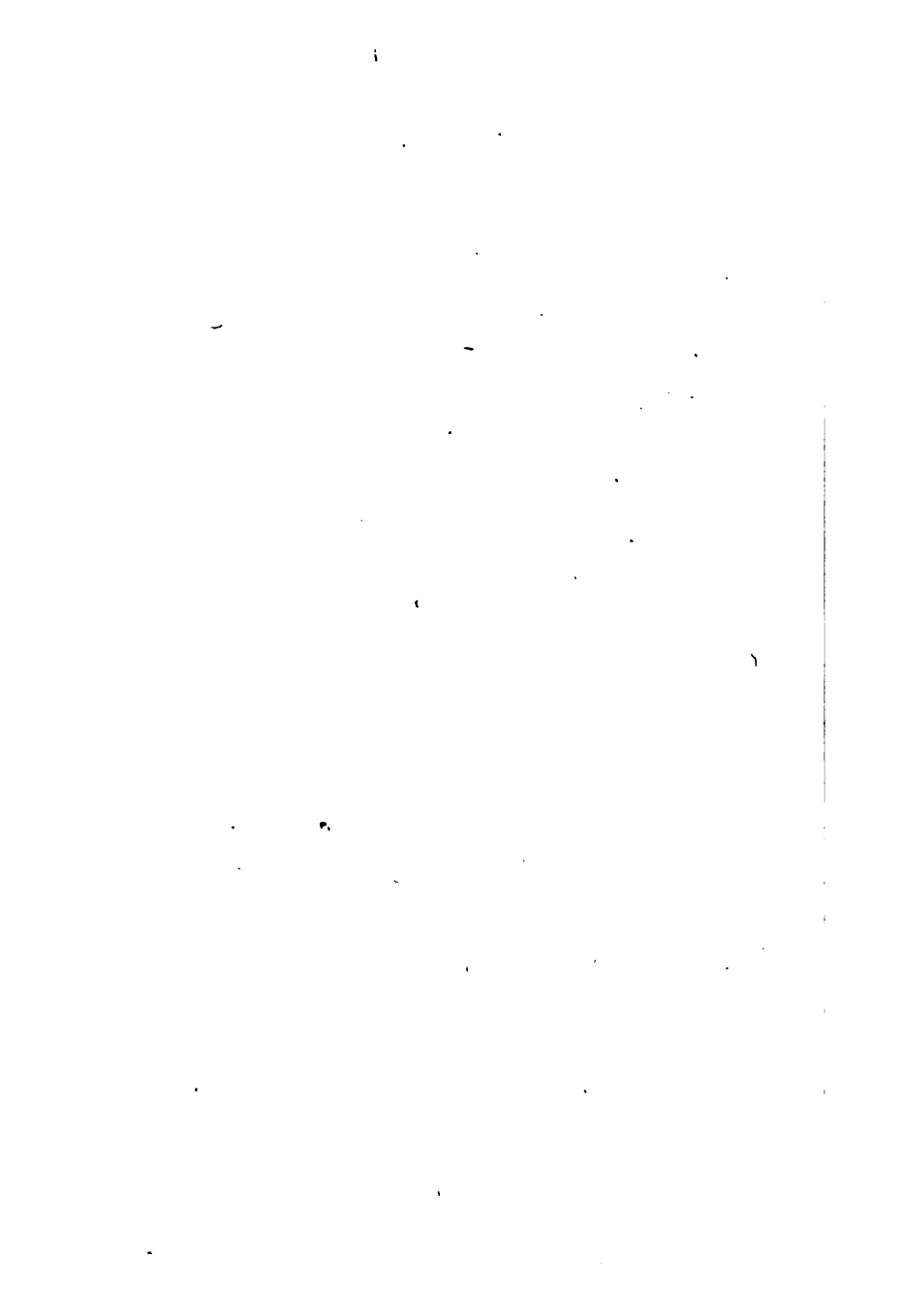
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